

S E R M O N S,

Preached in DEFENCE of

ALL RELIGION,

W H E T H E R

N A T U R A L or R E V E A L E D,

A T T H E

F R E N C H C H U R C H

I N

N O R W I C H.

B Y

J O S E P H N I C O L S C O T T.

—— φίλος δ' ἦν ἀνθρώποισι ;
Πάντας γὰρ φιλέσκει. ———

V O L. I.

L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.XLIII.

3. H. H. H. H. H.

TO THE

GENTLEMEN,

Who supported the

Church

Lecture in

Worship

Gentlemen,

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TO THE
GENTLEMEN,
Who supported the *French*
Church LECTURE in
NORWICH.

GENTLEMEN,

AT Your Desire, I Here lay
before You a *Specimen* of
the many *Truths* which
have been the Subject of Our joint
Examination. I call it a *Specimen*,
for it is in Reality no More ; or
the *Outlines* of a Piece which I must
leave to the *Considerate Reader* to
fill up for Himself. I could have
wished to have inserted More of
those *Practical* Discourses, with
which this *Defence* of *Revelation*
was intermixed ; But, I feared, it

A 2 would

DEDICATION.

would break in too Much on the *Thread* of the Argument. However, I have attempted *Something* in that Kind; and hope to have treated the *Controversy* itself in such a Way, that even They, who *differ* from My Sentiments of Things, will, at least, *approve* the *Spirit* in which They are advanced. I gladly embrace this Opportunity of expressing My *Public Acknowledgment* for those *repeated* Proofs I have received of Your *Friendship*; and, with sincerest Wishes for Your *Establishment* in all true *Wisdom* and *Virtue*,

12 JY 62

I remain

Your most Obedient, &c.

JOSEPH NICOL SCOTT,

THE

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S E R M O N I.

The Introductory Discourse, or the
great Duty of Enquiry after
T R U T H.

PROVERBS ii. 3, 4, 5.

*If Thou seekest her as Silver, and
searchest for her, as for hid Treasures, &c.*

AS the Spirit of *Liberty* assists our SERM.
Enquiry after Truth, so the I.
Truth in Turn supports the Spi-
rit of *Liberty*; and where *Both* are ac-
companied with the Principle of Charity,
or universal Benevolence, they constitute
a finished Character; such as reflects a
Lustre upon the Persons to whom it be-
longs, and makes them become the bright-
est Ornaments not only of their own par-
ticular

VOL. I. B

SERM. ticular Persuasions, but also of that com-
 I. mon Christianity, in which all Sides are
 agreed.

AND indeed, when I consider the Oc-
*cas*ion, on which this Assembly is met to-
 gether, I am not without Hopes, that
 there are some therein, that act upon these
 truly wise and religious Principles; form-
 ing themselves upon the same Plan with
 the noble *Bereans*, who *heard the Apostles*
gladly, and searched the Scriptures daily, to
see if these Things were so.

WHEREFORE, that we may the bet-
 ter cultivate these generous Sentiments,
 and obtain those valuable Ends at which
 they point, let Us turn our Thoughts up-
 on the Doctrine contained in the Text :
 Wherein the *wise Man* reminds Us of the
 Worth and Excellence of *Divine Truth*,
 and puts Us upon the most active and
 vigorous Pursuit thereof; assuring Us with-
 al, that, if this Duty be discharged aright,
 our Endeavours will be crowned with
 Success. *If Thou criest after Knowledge,*
and liftest up thy Voice for Understanding :
If Thou seekest Her as Silver, and searchest
for Her, as for hid Treasures : Then shalt
Thou

after *TRUTH.*

3

Thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God. SERM.
I.

IN my further Enlargement upon this Subject, I propose, *in the first Place*, to consider the present Duty, as grounded in the Worth and Excellency of *Divine Truth* in general; and, *Secondly*, to enforce the Fitness and Expediency of it, by some other collateral Reasons and Considerations.

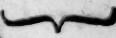
LET US, *in the first Place*, consider the present Duty, as it is grounded in the Worth and Excellency of *Divine Truth* in general.

ALL Knowledge consists in the Conformity of our Ideas, or Apprehensions of Things, with the Things themselves; as therefore there is something unnatural and deformed in Error, so there is a Grace and Beauty inseparable from *Truth*.

THE *Truth* is frequently compared in Scripture to the *Light*; and Light does more than serve to direct our Steps; it is greatly pleasing and refreshing to the Eye. It is so in all such Cases where the Organ does not labour under some Weakness or Obstruction. In like Manner, on

SERM. Supposition that every Obstruction be removed from the Mind, and our intellectual Sight be preserved in its proper Strength and Vigour, the *Truth*, when discerned, will appear in its native Charms : And (when received into a good and honest Heart) it yields much the same Pleasure and Satisfaction there, as the most masterly Strokes of Painting and Sculpture, or the most perfect Symmetry of Features, to the bodily Eye ;---And in a Word, what *Plato* observed of *Virtue*, may with equal Justness be applied to *Truth* ; that, could She be made visible to mortal Sight, She would excite an inexpressible Love and Admiration of Her.

BUT, besides that natural Grace and Pleasure that are annexed to the Knowledge of *Truth*, it should be still further endeared to us for the Sake of those good and excellent Effects, that depend upon it. *Truth* is the Ground and Rule of Practice. Perhaps, there is no Truth or Error in Matters of a religious Kind, that is merely speculative. Our Life and Practice will be influenced more, or less, according to those true or mistaken Apprehensions

ensions that we form of Things; and SERM.
 whatever affects our Practice, must, in I.
 Proportion, affect our Well-being and
 Happiness. 

It is, for Instance, of some Consequence for Men to conceive aright of God, in order to regulate their Deportment towards Him; I may, possibly, have Occasion to produce some Examples of this Kind, by shewing how easy it is for Us, when mis-apprehending some Natural or Moral Attributes of Deity, to be betrayed from hence into certain Practices that can by no Means be justified. At present it may suffice to observe in general, that Whoever would secure his Practice, must take Care to inform his Judgment. For these Reasons We cannot set too great a Value upon *Truth, Her Merchandise is better than Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold; She is more precious than Rubies, and all Things Thou canst desire, are not to be compared with Her.* So that whatever Care and Concern the Bulk of Mankind express to enlarge their Fortunes, and augment their temporal Substance, the like Care should every One

SERM. take to correct his Mistakes of Judgment,
 I. and increase his Stock of Knowledge.

*We should seek for Truth, as for Silver,
 and search for it, as for a hidden Treasure.*

Having considered the present Duty as grounded in the Worth and Excellency of *Truth* itself, I come now, *in the second Place*, to enforce the same by some collateral Reasons. And here, *first*, If the Author of Nature has endued us all with a certain Faculty, by which we are capable of distinguishing between Truth and Error, it becomes our immediate Duty to convert this Power to its proper Use. It must be so, unless an intelligent Being can be justified in the Disuse of his Intelligence, or a Being possessed of Reason, in the Disuse of Reason; and that too, in those Things, which, for their Solemnity and Importance, require the greatest Care and most industrious Exercise of Reason. I had almost said, it is impossible for any One to disallow the Justness of this Conclusion, that duly considers the Dignity of the Human Species, or estimates aright those noble Powers and Properties by which our Nature is distinguished from
 the

the Brutes that perish. Had We, like the inferior Parts of the Creation, been made incapable of knowing the Hand that formed us, or, like Them, been destitute of all such Capacity of distinguishing Moral Good and Ill; like Them, We might lay out the Whole of Existence, in gratifying our animal Desires, and Appetites, to the utter Neglect of all Divine and Virtuous Pursuits. But if, upon Enquiry, We find, that God has placed Us in a higher Sphere, and has assigned Us Powers that are proportioned to it, this Difference of the Species points out as great a Difference of Action; and the Talent itself informs us of the End and Use, to which it should be applied. So fit and reasonable it is that a Being, endued with a Power of Understanding, should endeavour to understand, and not countenance himself in Ignorance; while his own Make and Constitution of Nature informs Him, that it is his Duty to know.

WHEN I consider Things in this Point of Light, it appears as incumbent upon Us to apply the Understanding to the Search

SERM. of *Truth*, as to apply the Faculty of

I. Seeing to Objects of Sight, or that of
 ~~~~~ Hearing to Sounds; and We might with  
 equal Reason stop up the Avenues of Sense,  
 and, after having wilfully closed our Eyes,  
 run headlong upon the first Precipice that  
 lies in our Way; as by a Disuse of Reason  
 suffer Ourselves to fall into Error, espe-  
 cially when that Error relates to the Mo-  
 ral and Religious Kind, and consequent-  
 ly is an Error of such a Kind, as is at-  
 tended with the most dangerous Conse-  
 quences, both with Respect to our Beha-  
 viour here and Happiness hereafter.

IN *the second Place*, another Considera-  
 tion, that might be urged in Favour of  
 the present Duty, is, that natural Tenden-  
 cy which it has to improve our Virtues;  
 such is the Quality and Genius of *Truth*,  
 that it does not, like Error, affect the  
 Dark; it does not discourage or decline a  
 fair Enquiry; but on the Contrary, like  
 our Lord himself, it recommends and in-  
 culcates the great Duty of *Enquiry* upon  
 Mankind; and this too, notwithstanding  
 the many Obstacles that lie in the Way.  
 And now, what I propose to shew under  
 this

this Head is, that this very *Enquiry after Truth*, if performed aright, has a Tendency to improve our Virtues. In order to discern the Justness of this Remark, it must be considered, what Moral Principle it is, that first induced Us to enquire at all; and, when that Enquiry is begun, what Moral Principle it is that enables us to carry it on, amidst the various Difficulties, and Discouragements, that so frequent accompany this Work. The *Search of Truth* is an Employment that calls, not for one or two, but for many Virtues. It requires, *in the first Place*, a Principle of Integrity, and Impartiality; it calls for much Self-denial, and Humility; it obliges us to subdue and keep under our own Prejudices and Infirmities; and to practise much Lenity, and Forbearance, towards those of others. Why should I overlook that generous Disregard of Human Authority? Or, as generous a Contempt of worldly Repose and Reputation? Not to say, worldly Advantage and Preferment? Things which we find too often engaged on the Side of Error; and, indeed, Whosoever employs Himself

SERM.  
I.  
to



SERM. to a close and serious *Search of Truth*,  
 I. must set aside all worldly Considerations of  
 whatever Kind: As knowing, how strong  
 a Bias these Things may give to his Will,  
 and (through that) to his Judgment. Above  
 all, must our humble Enquirer act  
 under a firm Belief and Veneration of the  
*God of Truth*; preferring his single Ap-  
 probation before that of the whole World;  
 and crowning his own pious Endeavours,  
 with most ardent Prayers for his Direction  
 and Assistance.

IN these Principles must We begin, and  
 in these Principles must We carry on this  
 religious Pursuit; acting from a single dis-  
 interested Regard to *Truth*, and with the  
 firmest Resolution to follow that celestial  
 Guide wheresoever She goes; to follow  
 Her, I say, tho' leading Us through many  
 a rough and unbeaten Path, through Loss  
 of Friends and Loss of Reputation, and  
 through many a Difficulty that encounters  
 Us from without, and (what sometimes is  
 the greater Difficulty of the Two) through  
 many a Fear and Perturbation of Mind  
 within. Upon the Whole, We might just-  
 ly compare the *Search of Truth* to a noble  
*Palæstra*,

*Palæstra*, or Place of Exercise, where Men are trained up not in such Trials of Strength, or Skill, as improve their bodily Powers; but in such Exercises, as cultivate and improve their Minds. God, in his great Wisdom, having so ordered Things, that our Improvement in Virtue, and Improvement in Knowledge, might go Hand in Hand; and that Men might advance in the Former, by those very Steps which they take to increase the Latter. I am not insensible, that many other Considerations might be offered, to shew the Fitness and Expediency of the present Duty; but it may suffice to observe, *in the third and last Place*, that Whoever allows Himself in the Neglect of it, will never be safe from the Attacks of Error; and, if in Error, will have no Excuse or Apology for it. There are two Ways in which Men come at their respective Tenets in Religion: The One consists in the Neglect, and the Other in the Practice of a personal Enquiry. A Professor of the first Stamp takes up his Opinion upon Trust; and acts upon that very Principle, which, if allowed for right, will justify the *Pagan, Popish, and Mahometan* Superstitions

SERM.

I.

SERM. tions all in Turn ; so that this Principle cannot be a Friend of Truth, which is found  
 I. by Experience to be of so much Service to the Cause of Error. The Other wisely considers, that Truth must not be determined by Number of Votes, but by Strength of Arguments ; and therefore, instead of being a Slave to Custom, or Dupe to Human Authority, He examines the Nature of Things themselves, and *proves* (as the Apostle St. Paul expressed it) *what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable Will of God.* Should any One look round the habitable World, and consider how great a Part of it is overspread with Ignorance and Error ; and should He from thence proceed to trace this Effect to its proper Cause ; I am persuaded, He will find no better or more satisfactory Reason than this, that Mankind continue in Ignorance, because they will not be brought to *think* ; but usually take up with the first Religion, that is provided to their Hands : They rest their Souls upon Creeds, and Confessions of Faith, drawn up by other Men ; for whom they have contracted (they know not how) a great Veneration, and Esteem ; or they suffer



suffer themselves to be carried down the SERM.  
Stream of popular Custom and Example, I.  
without any due Thought and Consideration of their own. But few, alas! How few indeed! are willing to act the only wise and judicious Part, that Part which must approve and justify their Conduct both to God and Men; I mean that of generously thinking and judging for Themselves. The Consequence of which Neglect is this, that Men are led captive by Shoals into Error; and, which is still more deplorable, have no Excuse for their Error. For tho' all Men must allow it to be a good Apology for any Mistake of Judgment, that it was not owing to any criminal Default of ours, yet what Excuse shall We find for those Mistakes, which might with Ease have been prevented. I must therefore seriously exhort every Man that has his own Interest at Heart, and who is desirous to approve himself at the Bar of God, to admit of nothing into his Belief, or Practice, but which, after mature Enquiry, appears to him to be conformable to the Reason of Things, and the Will of God. Since, if this Duty of *Enquiry* be omitted,  
and

SERM. and the Man himself should depart this

I.

Life in Error, all Apology is precluded.

And I may venture to add still further, that even *Truth* itself, when embraced upon these *dishonourable* Terms, is not in the least beholden to Us. Whilst Error, if brought upon Ourselves by our own criminal Default and Folly, must of Necessity pull down the Frowns of God upon our Heads. And surely it deserves the most serious Consideration, as One well observes, “ That the Righteousness of God’s future Judgment, that Judgment wherein Men shall give an Account of themselves, not in the Lump, not by Sects and Parties, but every Man singly and personally for Himself, the Righteousness of that future Judgment does of Necessity suppose, that a strict Enquiry will be then made, not barely into the Truth and Falshood of our respective Opinions ; but (which is of far greater Consequence of the Two) upon *what Foot* these Opinions were advanced and maintained.” Here neither Numbers nor Example will avail us aught : The Secrets of every Heart will be revealed ; and the most retired

tired Springs, and Principles of all that we either professed or practised, be exposed to View; and that Religion, "and that alone, will pass current at the Bar of God," which was founded not in an unreasonable *Compliance* with the Modes and Customs of the Age; but which was seated in the *Heart*, and where such was the Man's own personal Love and Veneration for *Truth*, that He judged nothing too dear to be resigned for it, and no Toil or Self-denial too great to be undergone, in order to come at it. And, were it likely that the Man should commit some great Mistake of Judgment in such a Way as this, still his *Virtue* and *Integrity* will be rewarded. But when Men act upon the contrary Principle, even what Truth they *chance* to have, has nothing of true Virtue, *i. e.* nothing rewardable in it. Thus, in whatever Light we consider the Duty of the Text, it appears to be highly fit and reasonable; and, as such, worthy of being enjoined by God; what remains, but for every Individual to apply the Exhortation in the Text to Himself? I am persuaded, no Man can refrain from this who estimates



SERM. estimates aright the intrinsic Worth of

I. Truth ; or considers how many Benefits and Blessings it brings along with it ; for Truth is the Rule of Practice, and whatever affects our Practice, must, in Proportion, affect our Well-being and Happiness.

Who would not act so truly wise and reasonable a Part, that considers Himself as a reasonable Being ; and how unnatural a Thing it were to keep a-loof from a Duty that grows out of our common Nature ? What Man, that professes himself to be a Friend of Virtue, would neglect a Practice so truly good and virtuous in itself, and which has a Tendency to exercise, and by exercising to improve so many Virtues ? Above all, should it be considered that such is the present Depravity of Mankind, that Errors are to be had in Plenty ; they swarm about us, and encompass us on every Side ; while Truth is justly represented as something more remote and retired from View.

THE *Truth* (in the Judgment of *Solomon*) may be compared to a *bidden Treasure* ; and, as tho' it were conscious of its  
own

own real Worth, it obliges Us to be at SERM.  
some Pains to find it. I.

LET Us not therefore (by a Sloth and Indolence of the most egregious Kind) take up with those Opinions and Customs which happen to prevail, like so many Modes and Fashions, in particular Sects or Communities of Men, on which We are cast; since, if We trust to These, We shall frequently be misled, and like the deluded Wretch in the Fable, instead of the Substance, embrace a Cloud; and, which is worse, embrace it upon such *Terms*, as leave Us without *Excuse*; such as sink Us below the Standard of the Intellectual Species, and imply our sinning against our common Nature.

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## S E R M O N II.

The Unreasonableness of suffering  
the Will and Passions to influence  
the Judgment.

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2 P E T E R iii. 5.

*Of this They are willingly ignorant.*

SERM.  
II.

**T**HERE is no greater Let or  
Obstacle in the Way of Truth,  
than when the Understanding  
is justled, if I may so say, out of its proper  
Place, and the Will and Passions are  
substituted in its Room.

WHAT suits our Wish We are too apt  
to believe ; and tho' Few are so lost to all  
Sentiments of Virtue, as to espouse a Proposition  
which They do not think to be true, yet such is  
the Weakness of Human Nature, that We are too  
susceptible of a Bias, and are easily betrayed into the  
Belief



lief of what some Passion, or Interest of SERM.  
our own, makes Us desire to be true. II.

WHOEVER carries so partial a Spirit along with Him into his *religious* Enquiries, is, perhaps, of all Men, the least likely to come at Truth. His Judgment has not fair Play, and the only Faculty, by which he is able to distinguish between Truth and Error, is disabled for the right Performance of its Office.

THUS the Truth (as St. *Peter* observes) escapes our Notice ; but then it is owing to our own Will, that it does so.

THE Persons, whom our Apostle had his Eye upon, were *Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts* ; They were Men determined for a Life of Irreligion and Immorality ; and, if Men are once placed in this wretched Situation, They must *desire* of Course, that there should be no after Reckoning ; and what Men *desire* to be false, They will not be at much Pains, to be convinced of its being true.

AND now, that We may the better guard against this voluntary Ignorance, I propose, *in the first Place*, to advance something concerning the Nature of Truth  
C 2 itself,

SERM. itself, with the Faculty by which it is  
 II. received within the Soul.

AND then, *Secondly*, apply these general Remarks, to those *particular* Kinds, or Instances of voluntary Ignorance, that are found amongst Us.

IN the *first Place*, I am to

ADVANCE something concerning the Nature of Truth, with the Faculty by which it is received within the Soul.

ALL Knowledge consists in the Conformity of our Ideas, or Apprehensions of Things, with the Things *themselves*. Whoever conceives any Thing to be, what *in Reality* it is, understands the Truth, which belongs to that Thing. And whoever conceives any Thing to be, other than what *in Reality* it is, commits an Error or Mistake of Judgment, with Respect to that Thing. And since the Truth of Things is something *independent* both of Understanding and Will, and continues invariably the same, whether it be, or be not discerned by Us; and whether it be, or be not agreeable to Us; from hence it follows, that no Man should suffer his Will to tamper with his Judgment; or endeavour

*Will's influencing the Judgment.* 21

your to work up himself to a Belief, that any Proposition is either true or false, because Himself *would* have it to be so. SERM.  
II.

WHOEVER acts upon so unreasonable a Principle, does, in Effect, set Himself in Opposition to Truth, and endeavours, what in Him lies, to make Things to be, what they are not, and cannot be.

WE are told in History, that the Reformation, which *Julius Cæsar* made of the *Roman* Calendar, gave his Enemies a Handle to say, That He, who had triumphed over Earth, had a Mind to give Laws to Heaven; accordingly, when a certain Person observed, in *Cicero's* Hearing, That the Constellation of the Harp would rise To-morrow, the Other replied, It does so by Virtue of *Cæsar's* Edict. I need not tell you where lay the Force and Poignancy of this Reflexion.

EVERY Man sees the Absurdity of supposing, the Human Will should give Laws to the Movements of Nature.

SUCH, indeed, was the Power of *Cæsar*, that, if He pleased, He could level Mountains, and fill up Vallies; He could turn



SERM. the Course of Rivers ; or, by innumerable

II. Moles, contract and lessen the Sea itself.

But what Changes soever *Cæsar* could make in the Face and Appearance of Things, their primæval Natures would still be the same : And the Laws of Motion and Gravitation beyond his Reach. How much more those necessary and eternal Truths, which are independent of all Will and Constitution whatever ? Truths of so sacred and inviolable a Nature, that God himself thinks it no Diminution of his Majesty, to make Them the unalterable Rule of all his Actions.

AND, if God himself does not think it beneath Him, to govern his own Actions by Them, much less should They be disregarded by subordinate and dependent Agents.

WHOEVER, therefore, sets his own Will in Opposition to Truth, assumes to Himself a greater Liberty or Power, than what God himself can be supposed to take, by attempting to make something, that is independent of *all* Will, to depend upon *his* own,

AND

*Will's influencing the Judgment.* 23

AND yet, How often is this very SERM.  
Folly committed amongst Us? What suits II.  
our Desire, We are too forward to believe,  
and, though Men cannot always refute a  
Truth which makes against them, yield  
They will not.

THEIR Will and Passions rise up in  
Arms against the Truth, not considering  
that Truth, how much soever opposed,  
can never be overcome.

IT is like a strong and impregnable For-  
tress, that defies all Assault; or like some  
lofty Cliff, that looks down with Con-  
tempt upon the most violent and clamorous  
Storms, which impotently beat against its  
Sides: And, tho' most outrageously as-  
saulted by many a worldly Interest or Pas-  
sion, the Truth stands firm upon its own  
Base; being built not on Things of so  
changeable a Kind as Caprice or Fancy:  
But on something, that boasts the greatest  
Firmness and Stability, the Nature and  
Relation of Things.

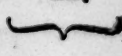
I MIGHT illustrate this by a very plain  
Example: That Relation of Equality,  
which Two and Two (when put together)  
bear to the Number Four, is eternally and

SERM. invariably the same; the Truth of this

II. Proposition, I say, whether it be, or be  
 not apprehended by Us, is still the same;  
 it is like *the God of Truth, and Father of  
 Lights*, without any *Variableness or Shadow  
 of Turning*; that were it possible that all  
 Men should conspire against this particular  
 Truth, nay more, were it possible for all  
 intelligent Beings from the Highest to the  
 Lowest, to agree among Themselves to  
 maintain the Contrary, the Truth of this  
 Proposition would be still the same; for  
 it is absolutely independent of all Will  
 whatsoever; and (with Reverence be it  
 spoken) it is not within the Power of *God  
 himself* to overthrow it, no more than it  
 is within his Power to divest Himself of  
 his own Existence, or cease to be that  
 All-knowing and Almighty Being which  
 He is.

I THEREFORE conclude from the Na-  
 ture of the Thing, that whoever would  
 come at Truth, must lay down this for a  
 standing Rule, a Rule not to be forgotten,  
 That no Appetite or Inclination, Prejudice  
 or Passion, be it of whatever Kind, whe-  
 ther it appears under Covert of religious  
 Zeal,

*Will's influencing the Judgment.* 25

Zeal, or is excited only by Considerations SERM.  
of worldly Reputation and Interest, must II.  
be allowed to influence his Judgment. It   
is the Judgment, and that alone, which  
has immediately to do with Truth; and  
all that the Will has to do, is either to ap-  
ply the intellectual Faculty to the Search  
of it, or, when it is found, to determine  
itself by it.

THE Truth and Nature of Things are  
too stubborn to yield to Will; and there-  
fore, instead of fondly attempting to make  
Them truckle and submit to Us, our Busi-  
ness is to submit to Them; otherwise it is  
We ourselves that will be Sufferers in the  
End, and not the Truth which is immutably  
the same, and cannot possibly be moved  
or shaken by whatever Attempts are made  
upon it.

BUT this Argument, which is taken  
from the Nature of Truth, may be in-  
forced, 2<sup>dly</sup>, by the Consideration of that  
Power or Faculty by which it is received  
within the Soul.

THE Truth, as I have already shewn  
from the Nature of the Thing, is the Sub-  
ject not of *Volition*, but of *Perception*;  
some-



SERM. something not to be *attempted*, or *willed*,  
 II. as are Things that fall within the Verge of  
 Power; the Truth is something independent of Will, and consequently, if We converse with it at all, it must be by the Help of *some other* Faculty, that Faculty by which We judge, reason, and discern; that Faculty by which We either immediately see the Reality of some Things, or infer the Reality of others, from their Connexion with those, which We already know.

OF all the Objects, that fall under the Cognizance of Sense, I know of none, that serves better to illustrate the present Point, than that of Light.

THE Light, by a gentle Violence, forces itself upon the Eye, without consulting the Will; and, by the same Way, enables that Organ to distinguish one Thing from another.

So much, indeed, depends upon a Man's Will, whether, *1<sup>st</sup>*, the Organ of Sight shall be in Exercise, or not. And if in Exercise, *2<sup>dly</sup>*, Whether it shall be directed upon this or that particular Object. As also with what Degree of  
 Accu-

*Will's influencing the Judgment.* 27

Accuracy and Intention the Survey shall be made. Nay more, after the Faculty of Sight has shewn the Difference of Objects, it still depends on the Will which to choose, whether the Path on the one hand, or the Precipice on the other. But as to the *Objects themselves*, or those *Impressions*, which the Light takes from them, and conveys to the Organ of Sight, These are independent of Will. Here the Man is intirely passive, it is not the Power of Will, but the Power of *Perception* that is concerned. You will apply this Simile, with Ease, to the Case under Consideration. It is by an Act of the Will, that a Man employs his Understanding (which We may call the *Eye* of the Soul) upon this or that particular Branch of Science; it depends, I say, on the Will, whether the Understanding shall be employed in the Examination of this or that particular Truth, and with what Degree of Care and Fidelity the Enquiry shall be made; and after, by a right Exercise of Reason, the Truth is discovered, it is by an Act of the Will a Man chooses to maintain it in his Profession, and follow it in Practice.

BUT

SERM.

II.

SERM. BUT as to the *Assent* of the Understanding *itself*, This follows the apparent Evidence with which the Truth is accompanied ; with *This* the Will has nothing to do, and, if the Will is not concerned here, much less those Things, that are supposed to determine the Will ; all are foreign to this Point, and for that Reason should be absolutely set aside, I mean, such Things as Hope and Fear, Joy and Sorrow, Love and Hatred, and whatever other Passions are incident to the Human Nature ; for Truth is independent of them all ; and so also is the Assent of the Understanding, which if preserved in its proper Strength, and employed on Objects suited to its Capacity, and not defrauded of proper Materials of Conviction, will as *naturally* submit to Truth, as the Eye submits to the Reception of Light, or the Sense of Hearing to Sounds ; it does so in the Sense assigned, *independent* of Will, as will appear to any One that tries the Experiment, or puts the Question to Himself, whether all He has to hope, or all that He has to fear, all that can excite his Joy, or all that can create Him Sorrow, all  
Temp-

*Will's influencing the Judgment.* 29

SERM.

II.

Temptations that can be laid before Him by Another's Will, or all the Efforts and Endeavours of his own, can bring Him to believe, that the Form and Properties of a Square are the same with those of a Circle, or bring Him to call the certain Proportion of Numbers into Question, and *really* to debate in his own Mind, whether Two and Two, when put together, are equal to Four. Thus have I premised some Things concerning the Nature of Truth, with the Faculty by which it is received within the Soul. What remains is, to apply these general Remarks to those particular Instances of voluntary Ignorance, that are found amongst Us. But that opens too large a Field of Matter to fall within the Compass of a single Discourse, and therefore, adjourning it to another Time, I will conclude, at present, with one or two Practical Reflexions that arise out of the present Subject.

By what has been advanced concerning the Nature of Truth, and that Faculty by which it is received within the Soul, We may infer, How weak and unreasonable a Practice is that of having  
Recourse



SERM. Recourse to violent and coercive Methods  
 II. in Matters of a *religious* Kind.

THIS Method of Proceeding may, indeed, bring Men to dissemble their real Sentiments, and so introduce a World of Hypocrisy into Religion, but cannot possibly oblige them to change them. Whoever would gain that Point, must convince Us of our Mistake ; and, in order to do That, He should set the Truth before Us, with sufficient Evidence, *i. e.* He should address Himself to our Understanding ; That, and that Faculty *alone*, having immediately to do with Truth. Whoever endeavours to make an Impression from another Quarter, may, indeed, through our Default, make a Conquest of our Wills, but cannot possibly gain over the Judgment.

HE may do so much Disservice to the Cause of Religion and Virtue, as to shake and stagger our Integrity ; but He is not likely to add one Grain to our Stock of Knowledge. Nay more, I may venture to say, Should any one, in Process of Time, be made a Convert upon such Terms as these, though a Convert to *Truth itself*,  
 He

*Will's influencing the Judgment.* 31

He is a Sufferer by the Exchange ; because SERM.  
He loses more by parting with his Inno- II.  
cence, than can possibly be made up to  
Him by his Increase of Knowledge. To  
explain my Meaning, it should be owned  
in Favour of these indirect Proceedings,  
that We can by addressing a Man's Hopes  
or Fears, or by laying some Temptation  
in his Way, induce him to set aside all  
Enquiry, or, at least, to satisfy Himself  
with too partial and imperfect an Exami-  
nation, and so, by defrauding the Judg-  
ment of the proper Materials of Convic-  
tion, it may be brought to declare itself  
on our Side : But then this whole Pro-  
ceeding is built on the *Ruin* of Virtue,  
and consequently the old Objection recurs  
in its full Weight and Force, that, Should  
*Truth itself* be received upon such ignoble  
Terms, the Man is a Sufferer by the Ex-  
change ; nor will the Violation of his In-  
tegrity be compensated by the Soundness  
of his Belief.

By the Help of the aforesaid Remarks,  
We may, *in the second Place*, correct ano-  
ther Infirmary, which, though found a-  
mong

SERM. mong good and pious Men, greatly embarrasses the Pursuit of Truth.  
 II.

THERE are in Religion some Truths of so *sublime* and *venerable* a Kind, that a good Man cannot well examine them without a secret Fear. But then this Fear, how just and decent soever, must come under proper Regulation, such as right Reason and Religion shall prescribe.

THIS Fear *works well*, if, in Conjunction with the Principle of Integrity, it makes Men redouble their Application, and judge no Pains too great to be taken, in order to come at Truth.

IT *works well*, when the Fear of being misled, in Things of so solemn and important a Kind, disposes to read and hear what is offered on both Sides the Question, that so the Understanding, like a prudent and impartial Judge, may be furnished with sufficient Matter, by which to determine and pass its Sentence accordingly.

IT *works well*, when the Fear of God excludes the Fear of Man, and makes us shake off the inglorious Bonds and Shackles of Human Authority, Custom, and Example,

*Will's influencing the Judgment.* 33

ample, and determine to build our Faith, SERM.  
not on the Doctrines and Traditions of II.  
Men, but on the Reason of Things and  
the Word of God.

NOT so, when our Fear degenerates into Superstition and Bigotry, and betrays Us into a certain low, servile, and abject Turn of Mind: Such as either absolutely beats Us off from all Enquiry, and makes Us take up, at Hazard, with the first Religion, that is provided to our Hand; or, at least, creates those Hurries and Perturbations of Mind, that so much disconcert and disturb the Judgment, that the intellectual Faculty is no longer in a Capacity for the right Discharge of its Office.

I THINK Myself the rather obliged to caution both Myself and Others against this Mistake, as I have found in Fact, It is a Rock on which Some have split; not considering, that, though the Passions have their Use in Religion as well as in common Life, yet, for Want of being reduced under the Conduct of good Sense and Reason, They may have a different Effect.



SERM.

II.

THE Passions are like Sails to a Vessel, which swell with a good Gale of Wind, and accelerate the Motion : But then, if Something else does not *preside*, and sit at the Helm, We may steer our Course far off from the Port of Truth, and lose our wandering Barque upon the Shelves and Sands of Error.

OF so much Service are the Passions, when subjected to a better Guide ; not so, when We mistake their Use, and suffer Them to usurp Authority over the Understanding.

As it is by *that* Faculty alone, that We are capable of distinguishing Truth and Error, it is of the utmost Consequence that this Faculty, like our bodily Sight, be preserved in its proper Strength and Vigour, and not disabled by any Passion or Perturbation of Mind, though sheltering itself under the Appearance of Humility or religious Zeal ; much less, when it is excited by Considerations of worldly Interest. Alas ! What avail these Strifes and Struggles within the Breast, these violent Emotions and Agitations of Soul, in that  
Case,

*Will's influencing the Judgment.* 35

Case, where not the Will, but Judgment SERM.  
is concerned? II.

WHOEVER would come at Truth, must secure that Frame and Temper of Mind, which is so elegantly described by one of our own Poets, Calm and unruffled as a Summer's Sea, when not a Breath of Wind sweeps over its Surface; or, to use the Words of a greater Writer: We must *receive in Meekness* (in the mildest and most dispassionate Frame of Mind) *the engrafted Word*;--In this Spirit are We most likely to convince *Another* of his Mistakes; and in the same Spirit, if St. *James's* Advice be just, We should endeavour to correct *our own*.

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## S E R M O N III.

God the Fountain of *All* Good,  
whether Natural or Revealed.

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JAMES i. 17.

*Every good and perfect Gift is from  
above, and cometh down from the  
Father of Lights, with whom there  
is no Variableness, nor Shadow of  
Turning.*

SERM.  
III.

**S**T. James, intending to inspire Us  
with the most just and rational  
Sentiments concerning God's Moral  
Government, advises us to regard Him,  
as the Author of Good, and not to im-  
pute to Him, but to Ourselves, the Ori-  
ginal of Moral Evil ; *Let no Man, when he  
is tempted, say, I am tempted of God ; for  
God cannot be tempted of Evil : His all-  
perfect and self-sufficient Nature sets Him  
above*

above the Reach of all Temptation ; *neither tempteth He any Man* ; for How should a Being, removed at so infinite a Distance from Sin Himself, be necessary to the Producing of Sin in Others ? *But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn aside and enticed by his own Lust or Desire ; and Lust, when it has conceived, brings forth Sin ; and Sin, when it is finished, brings forth Death.*

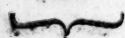
THUS, instead of ascribing Moral Corruption to a Divine Constitution, We must confess, that (if corrupted at all) We are self-corrupted and self-depraved. *Do not err, my beloved Brethren, Do not suffer Yourself to be misled, or go astray from Truth, as is done by giving Ear to all such Opinions as derogate from the Honour of God.*

*EVERY good and perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights ; from the supreme Source or Fountain of Good ; and then to insinuate, How uniform and ever-consistent He is with Himself, it is subjoined : With whom there is no Variableness, nor Shadow of Turning.*



SERM.

III.



A LATE ingenious Writer, who supposes that a Comparison was here intended between the Supreme Being, and the Sun in the Firmament, has observed, That the Terms, which our Apostle uses, "Are  
 " of the Astronomic Sort, according to  
 " the Appearances of Things, and the  
 " common Notions of Mankind. Upon  
 " these Appearances and received Opinion,  
 " the Sun, the Prince of the Planetary  
 " Heavens, has his Parallaxes or  
 " Changes ; appears different in the East,  
 " in his Meridian Height, and Decline  
 " to the West ; He has his Annual Departures  
 " from Us, which are the *Solstices*, or *Tropai* ; according to these  
 " Departures, He casts different Shades ;  
 " but God is that unchangeable Sun,  
 " that does not rise or set, come nearer  
 " to, or go farther from any Part or Space  
 " of the Universe ; an eternal unapproachable  
 " Light, without any Variation, or  
 " Mixture of Shade."

I WILL not be responsible for every Stroke in this beauteous Criticism, which, in some Respects, may possibly be too refined for the Simplicity of our Apostle's  
 Style ;

Style ; but so far, I think, is evident, that, SERM.  
III.  
when the Supreme Being is called *the Fa-*

*ther of Lights*, by this Title He is represented as the Parent of Good, not in one or two Instances, but in *all* that copious Variety, which is suggested in the foregoing Clause, *Every good and perfect Gift is from above,---and cometh down from the Father of Lights* ; and when the Apostle adds, *with whom there is no Variableness, no Variation, nor Shadow of Turning*, He suggests this Truth, That God is *immu-*  
*tably* good, He is not so by Fits or Starts, but always similar and of a Piece with Himself. He is one compleat and uniform Globe of Light, with whom there is no Diversity or Change in the Sense assigned, and with whom there is no such Projection of Shade, as We have from other Luminaries, when, instead of being fixed in a vertical Position, or exactly over our Heads, They appear to change their Place, and remove at a Distance from Us. He is, in plain Terms, not only good, but invariably so ; and consequently there was no Room for that irreligious Notion which the Apostle com-

SERM. bates in this Content, as though so good  
 III. and excellent a Being could be the Author of Moral Ill: *Let no Man say, when tempted, I am tempted of God*; for, as God from the absolute Perfection of his Nature is not susceptible of Temptation, so *He tempteth no Man*; He will not be accessary to the producing That, which his Soul abhors. *Every good and perfect Gift comes from Him*, and, considering the *Immutability* of His Nature, Nothing that is inconsistent with the Idea of Goodness, Nothing that is absolutely ill, and which is not some Way or other conducive to Good, can with Reason be expected from Him. *He is the Father of Lights, with whom there is no Variation, or Shadow of Turning.*

AND now, that I may the better assist your Meditation on this Article of Religion, I propose to do two Things: *First*, to lay before you a Specimen of those *good and perfect Gifts*, that We derive from God. And, after having examined these Proofs or Instances of His Goodness, I shall proceed to the *second* Truth, contained in the Text; I mean That, considering



dering the Immutability of his Nature, SERM.  
Nothing, that is opposite to Good, can III.  
with Reason be expected from Him.

*IN the first Place*, to lay before you  
a Specimen of those *good and perfect Gifts*,  
that We derive from God.

It must be owned, the immediate Occasion, on which the Reflexion of the Text was introduced, relates only to the *Moral Ill.* *Let no Man say, when He is tempted, meaning to the Act of Sin, I am tempted of God.* And yet, the Apostle seems to advance upon this a more general Maxim in that Clause, *Every good and perfect Gift, &c.* Nor is it any Objection against our Understanding Him in so large and general a Sense, that He styles God *the Father of Lights*, because, in the *Eastern Languages*, the Terms, *Light and Darkness*, are used to express as well the *Natural*, as the *Moral Good and Ill.* And since the main End of this Discourse (which is to feed the Principle of Devotion and Gratitude to God) is best consulted by taking Things in the greatest Extent, on this Foot I would observe, *in the first Place*, That We are indebted to  
Him



SERM. Him for that *Foundation-Gift*, and without which We are absolutely incapable of any other Gift, the Gift of Existence.

III.

To Him We are also beholden for the fair and curious Workmanship of the Human Body; and from the same Quarter We derive the still nobler Faculties and Powers, which belong to the indwelling Soul; Those Powers, by which We are able to come at Truth, and, when known, to determine our Conduct by it. And this not only in such Instances, as are necessary for the Preservation of the Animal Life, but in order to our moving in a much *higher* Sphere of Action; I mean those Powers, by which We are capable of conversing with *Moral* Truths, and are susceptible of a just Impression from the Beauties of Holiness, and Charms of Virtue, and, in a Word, appear (from our very *Nature*) Beings formed for Divine Imitation, and Divine Communion.

AND, as our Original Formation, with all our Natural Furniture, is from God, so,

*in the second Place, our continued Support and Preservation.* SERM.  
III.

ALL Things (as the ancient Poet, cited by St. Paul, expressed it) are full of *Jove*: In the Father of the Universe *We live, We move, and We have our Being.* The same Almighty Hand, which at first set the Machine of Nature at Work, is still employed in supporting its several Springs and Wheels, with those Laws of Motion, by which They act upon each other, that, if We may credit the clearest Proofs of Philosophy, “ A Divine Operation is “ no less concerned in the Beating of a “ Pulse, and Circulation of the Vital Juices, than in supporting those greater “ Movements of Nature, to which We “ owe both our Light and Heat, the “ grateful Vicissitude of Day and Night, “ and constant Return of the Times and “ Seasons.”

SHOULD We descend from Hence, *in the third Place*, unto God's Moral Government. Here, whether We consider the more stated and ordinary Course of Things, with those *Natural* Rewards and Punishments, that are annexed to the Moral  
ral

SERM. III. *ral Good and Ill, or those Extraordinary Operations, which the Governor of the World has, at due Distances of Time, interposed, in Support of true Religion and Virtue, Here We find Ourselves encompassed with fresh Marks of his Goodness, though indeed, considering the Imperfection of the Human Knowledge, the same Observation will hold good of Both, That We see but a Portion of his Ways, and no Wonder, if, as in the Natural World, so also in the Moral We are not able to assign a Reason for every Fact, but, whilst surrounded with so many clear and evident Demonstrations of His Goodness, We should not be surprised to meet with some Things which We are not able, at present, to account for, but must leave to some future Time to clear up and explain.*

THE Natural Government of the World, as \* One well observes, “ Is carried on by *general* Laws, and one good Consequence of this Constitution is most apparent to the Eye of Reason ; for, in such a Constitution of Things, Human

\* Butler in his *Analogy*.



“ man Reason is exercised ; our Reflexion  
“ and Forecast are employed ; Indolence  
“ discouraged, and the Application of our  
“ Active Powers made indispensably ne-  
“ cessary ; and (our Powers being ob-  
“ served to improve by Use) the Health  
“ and Vigour, both of our Minds and  
“ Bodies, is, in this Way, best consulted ;”  
and We are placed, upon the *Whole*, in  
a better Situation, than if God, by a  
constant Succession of Miracles, should  
either prevent our Defects of Conduct,  
or stave off the Inconveniencies, which  
We draw upon Ourselves by them.

Now, What has been said of God's  
*Natural* Government, may with equal  
Justness be applied to his *Moral*. So far  
as We can gather from the History of the  
World, He has, *in general*, suspended our  
Growth in Knowledge and Virtue, upon  
the right Exercise of our Natural Powers ;  
though, in his great Goodness, He has, at  
due Distances of Time, thrown in some  
superadded Helps, and interposed for the  
Reformation of Mankind, in an *Extra-  
ordinary* Way, when the *stated* Means of  
Instruction, through our Default, have not  
so

SERM.  
III.



SERM.

III.

so well succeeded. And, *perhaps*, One Reason, why these supernatural Interposures are not more frequently repeated, may be *this*, to prevent that Negligence or Presumption, that might be occasioned by them. As We find, in Fact, to this Day, there is no Part of *Christendom*, where Ignorance and Superstition so much abound, as in those Countries, where a *continued* Miracle is received for true, and Men are taught to pay an Implicit Faith in the supposed Infallibility of Others, instead of bringing a just Exercise of Reason into their Religion, and judging for Themselves. But the descending into so many Particulars, would open too wide a Field of Matter; let Us therefore pause here, and see what We have already gained. That the Original Grant of our Existence, with every intellectual and corporeal Power, That our continued Preservation and Support, with that all-wise Plan, or Constitution of Things, which appears to be so well formed for the Improvement, both of our Natural and Moral Powers, All are from God, *the Father of Lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect Gift,*

*Gift.* And I need not say, What large SERM.  
and ample Materials for Gratitude and III.  
Praise, are here set before Us; or, in how  
masterly a Way, the *most*, if not all, these  
Topics are interwoven in those unaffected  
Draughts of Piety and true Devotion, that  
are interspersed in the Sacred Writings.

*SERVE the Lord with Gladness, and  
come before his Presence with Singing; know  
Ye, that the Lord, He is God, it is He  
that made Us, ---- and again, I will praise  
Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfull-  
ly made. My Substance was not hid from  
Thee, when I was made in Secret, and cu-  
riously wrought in the lowest Parts of the  
Earth. How low and abject soever the  
Materials, from which the Human Frame  
was raised, Not so the Divine Art, or  
or Workmanship laid out upon it.*

*THINE Eye did see my Substance,  
yet being imperfect; and in thy Book all  
my Members were written ---- when as yet  
there was none of them. Alluding to that  
pre-contrived Plan, that had been formed  
in the Mind of God, before He threw  
it out into Act, and raised so fair and beau-  
tiful a Structure from it.*

AND

SERM. AND, as to those greater Movements of

III. Nature, In how great a Pomp of Language is the Divine Influence and Superintendency set before Us! *Lift up your Eyes on High, and behold,—Who has created these Things? That bringeth out their Hosts by Numbers? He calleth them All by their Names, for that He is strong in Power, not One fails—He appointeth the Moon for Seasons, the Sun knoweth his Going down. Praise Ye Him, therefore, Sun and Moon, praise Him all Ye Stars of Light; praise Him Ye Heaven of Heavens, and Ye Waters that are above the Heavens. Let them praise the Name of the Lord; for He commanded; and they were established, He has made a Decree which shall not pass.* Aluding to those fixed and settled Laws, by which this stupendious Machine is obliged to move, and on which its Order and Regularity depend.

BUT after all, There is no *Branch* of the Divine Goodness, on which the Holy Penmen so much delight to dwell, as that which shines forth in God's *Moral Government*. In what moving Strains are we Here informed, That *the Lord is merciful*  
and



*and gracious, slow to Anger, and plenteous in Goodness; He will not always chide, neither will He keep Anger for ever; He has not dealt with Us after Our Sins, nor has He rewarded Us according to Our Iniquities; for, as the Heaven is high above the Earth, so great is His Mercy towards Them that fear Him—And as a Father pities His Children, so the Lord pities Them that fear Him.* And then follows that fair and beautiful Contrast between the Flux and Instability of Human Life, on the One Hand, and that *invariably* fixed and steady Regard, which God bears to the Cause of Piety and Virtue, on the Other: *As for Man, His Days are as Grass—As the Flower of the Field, so He flourisheth, a Wind passeth over it, and it is gone—But the Mercy of the Lord is from Everlasting to Everlasting, upon Them that fear Him, and His Righteousness to Childrens Children, to Such as keep His Covenant, and remember His Commandments to do Them.*

AND though there is a just and reasonable Sense, in which that All-righteous Being may be said to set *His Face against the Wicked*, yet even *These* are encouraged,



SERM. by the Consideration of his Grace and

III. Clemency, to reform. Is it in the Power of

Language, to set This in a stronger Light, than is done by that Expostulation of St. Paul, *Despiseſt Thou the Riches of his Goodneſs, Patience, and Long-ſuffering?* Or, in that moſt pathetic Account, which We have of the Divine Philanthropy from a greater Hand, *And when He was yet a far off* (alluding to the returning Prodigal) *His Father ſaw Him, and was moved with Compaſſion, and ran, and fell upon His Neck, and kiſſed Him.*

AND, ſince We have now brought down the Argument to the *laſt* and *moſt perfect* Revelation, which God has made of His Goodneſs in the Goſpel of His dear Son, What think We of having ſo rich a *Proof* of God's paternal Love and Care, in ſo great a Perſonage ſent down to publiſh His Father's Grace amongſt Us? Who *has alſo ſuffered for Us, the Juſt for the Unjuſt, that He might bring Us to God?* What think We of *Life and Immortality* being brought to Light? And, in a Word, What think We of the *moſt perfect* System of Religion ſet before Us, *God Himſelf bearing*

*whether Natural or Revealed.*

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bearing Witness to it, with Signs and Wonders, and divers Gifts, and Distributions of the Holy Ghost according to HIS OWN WILL ?

SERM.  
III.

HAVING laid before You this short, and at best imperfect, *Specimen* of the Divine Goodness, let Us now turn Our Thoughts upon the *Second* Truth contained in the Text, I mean, That God is not only good, but *immutably* so : That He is always uniform and of a Piece with Himself ; and consequently, as He is the Author of Good, so Nothing that is opposite to Good, Nothing absolutely ill, or which, some Way or other, is not conducive to the general Weal, can with Reason be expected from Him.

THIS Part of the Argument is the more necessary to be considered, because amidst that Profusion of Good, which that All-bounteous Hand has shed down upon Us, We find some Things of a contrary Aspect, and which, for Want of Care, may stagger our Faith in God.

FOR it may possibly be objected, That, if God be so *invariably* good, How comes it to pass, that in one and the same Divine

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Constitution We should meet with Pain and Pleasure, Health and Sickneſs, Life and Death, for Mankind in *Common*, and no Diſtinction made (*ſo far* as this Kind of Suffering is concerned) between the Righteous and Wicked? Here it ſhould be obſerved, *in the firſt Place*, That, ſuppoſing theſe Things could not be accounted for within Our own Species, conſidered *a-part* from the Reſt of the Univerſe, it will not follow from thence, That *no Good* ariſes from Them with Reference to the *Whole*; and, conſidering the Imperfection of the Human Knowledge, “We  
 “ muſt not be ſurpriſed, or ſtaggered, if  
 “ as in the Natural, ſo in the Moral  
 “ World, We are not always able to aſ-  
 “ ſign a Reaſon for every Appearance.” But, as was *before* obſerved, We ſhould ſit down contented with thoſe evident Proofs, which we have of the Divine Goodneſs and Wiſdom, though We are not able to account for *ſome* Things, but muſt leave Them to ſome future Time to clear up and explain.

It is not eaſy to ſet this Part of the Argument in a better Light than is done to  
 My



My Hand, by the Noble Author of the *SERM.*  
*Characteristics*, who, after having laid down *III.*  
this Maxim, That, in our Reasoning upon  
these Things, We should consider, not  
our Kind or Species *a-part*, but in Rela-  
tion to the *whole System* of Beings, subjoins  
as follows :

‘ Now in this mighty Union (meaning  
‘ of the Universal System) Should there  
‘ be such Relation of Parts, one to ano-  
‘ ther, as are not easily discovered ; if, on  
‘ this Account, the *End* and *Use* of Things  
‘ do not *every where* appear, there is no  
‘ Wonder ; since it is no more than what  
‘ must happen of Necessity ; nor could  
‘ the Supreme Wisdom have ordered it  
‘ otherwise ; for, in an Infinity of Things,  
‘ a Mind, which sees not *infinitely*, can  
‘ see Nothing fully.’ And then He illus-  
trates this truly just Observation by the fol-  
lowing Comparison, ‘ Imagine, says He,  
‘ only some Person, a Stranger to Naviga-  
‘ tion, and ignorant of the Nature of the  
‘ Sea, and Waters, How great his Asto-  
‘ nishment would be, when finding Him-  
‘ self on Board some Vessel, *anchoring*



SERM.

III.

‘ *at Sea*, remote from all Land Prospect ;  
 ‘ while it was yet a Calm, He viewed  
 ‘ the ponderous Machine firm, and motionless, in the Midst of the smooth  
 ‘ Ocean, and considered its Foundation beneath, together with its Cordage, Masts,  
 ‘ and Sails above ; How easily would He  
 ‘ see the Whole one regular Structure, all  
 ‘ Things depending on one another, the  
 ‘ Uses of the Rooms below, the Lodgments and Conveniences of Men and  
 ‘ Stores ; but, being ignorant of the Intent and Design of all *Above*, Would He  
 ‘ pronounce the *Masts* and *Cordage* to be  
 ‘ *useless* and *cumbersome*, and for this Reason condemn the Frame, and despise  
 ‘ the Architect ? O my Friends, let Us not  
 ‘ thus betray our Ignorance, but consider,  
 ‘ *Where* We are, and in *What* a Universe.  
 ‘ Think of the many Parts of this *vast*  
 ‘ Machine, in which We have so little  
 ‘ Insight, and of which it is impossible,  
 ‘ We should know the Ends and Uses,  
 ‘ when, instead of seeing to the *highest*  
 ‘ Pendants, We see only some *lower Deck*,  
 ‘ and are, in this dark Case of Flesh, confined

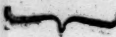
‘fined even to the *Hold* and meanest Station of the Vessel.’

SERM.  
III.

I WAS the more willing to insert this Remark, as it shews *in general*, ‘How weak and inconclusive are all *such* Objections, as are taken from our own partial and imperfect Views of Things;’ and *in particular*, it may be of Use, to confirm *Those* in the Belief of an All-wise super-intending Mind, who are shocked with certain Appearances in the present Constitution of Things, which, for Want of admitting the Doctrine of a Future State, They find Themselves at a Loss to reconcile.

BUT This leads Me to observe, *in the second Place*, That, in order to do Justice to the present State, We should take in its *Relation* to a Future. In other Words, We should regard the present Constitution of Things (so far as it relates to Us) as well adapted to Beings, not yet confirmed in the Habits of Virtue, but placed in a State of Discipline and Trial.

As We are now placed in a State of Probation, and where We are to be tried and purified, in order to our future Happiness,

SERM. and where We are liable to be seduced by  
 III.  bodily Appetites to disregard the Laws of  
 Reason, and Truth, 'as We are (says a  
 ' late judicious Writer) in such a State,  
 ' God our Heavenly Father may, in much  
 ' Wisdom and Goodness, mix any Degree  
 ' of Natural Evil with Our Condition, and  
 ' appoint a Variety of Sufferings,---to cor-  
 ' rect Our inordinate Passions, and Our un-  
 ' due Attachment to Things of Sense;  
 ' to curb and imbitter Vice, and to dis-  
 ' pose Our Minds to sober Reflexion.' To  
 which it might be subjoined, That, by the  
 same Constitution of Things, a wide Field  
 is opened for the Exercise of our Resigna-  
 tion and Submission, Constancy and Mag-  
 nanimity, with other Virtues that are  
 thrown out into Action by a State of Suf-  
 fering. Above all, it should be remem-  
 bered, That our present Sufferings, which,  
 comparatively speaking, *are for a Moment*,  
 if endured with a Christian Patience and  
 Constancy, will serve only to augment  
 our future Reward. So just was that Re-  
 mark of *Plato*, 'That We must thus  
 ' judge of a righteous Man, that whether  
 ' He is in Poverty or Sicknes, or in any  
 ' other



‘ other apparent Evils, They will turn to SERM.  
‘ His Advantage, living or dying.’ Or, as III.  
the same Thought is conveyed with a  
greater Force and Energy of Expression in  
the Scripture-style, ‘ *We know, that All*  
‘ *Things shall work together for Good to*  
‘ *Those that love God.*’ And again, ‘ *All*  
‘ *are Yours, Whether Paul, or Apollos, or*  
‘ *Cephas, or the World, or Life, or Death,*  
‘ *or Things present, or Things to come;*  
‘ *All are Yours, and Ye are Christ’s, and*  
‘ *Christ is God’s.*’

THUS have I endeavoured, in Justice  
to the Supreme Being, to shew, That He is  
not only good, but *invariably* so. He is  
*the Father of Lights,---with whom there is*  
*no Variableness, nor Shadow of Turning.*

WHAT remains, is to conclude with  
some Practical Reflections, upon the Whole.

AND here, *in the first Place*, There is  
Something worthy of Our Imitation, in that  
most religious Concern, which Our Apost-  
le expresses for the Divine Honour, and  
in His Care to clear Him from all Im-  
putation of being accessory to the Produc-  
tion of Sin. For, if this Method of  
Reasoning be so commendable in *Him*,  
Why



SERM. Why should it not be the same in *Us*?

III.

Why should not *We* have the same Veneration for *the Father of Our Spirits*, and be alike jealous of admitting into Our Belief Whatever derogates from His All-perfect Character, and tends to sink Him in our Esteem? 'I would be far from insinuating, as tho' the several Mistakes of Judgment, committed with Reference to God, and his Moral Government, implied the *Want* of a just Veneration for Him; for I believe that there are good and pious Men, on all Sides the Question.' But, this good Principle being pre-supposed, it could be wished, that Every Man would examine his Opinions *by it*, and not be over-hasty to admit any Thing, which appears to be contradictory to it. Should We, for Instance, consider this Apostolic Account of the Origin of the Moral Ill, At how great a Distance does He remove it from God? Instead of grounding it in any Scheme or Constitution of *His*, With how much Care does He direct Us to place it in *Ourselves*? *Let no Man, when tempted, say, I am tempted by God, Every Man is tempted, when*

*when drawn aside* (not by God, or by any Constitution of Things that come from Him, but) *from His own Lust.* SERM.  
III.

AND, by the Way, if St. *James* would not allow the Deity to be accessory in the mere Temptation to Sin, What must He have thought of *that Hypothesis*, which represents this All-perfect Being, as sending Us into the World, from the Birth, depraved and disabled for All that is spiritually and truly good? In vain do We think to cover so exceptionable a Scheme, by transferring the Blame from God to *Adam*; for every Parent, and consequently the first Parent and Founder of the Human Race, is not to be considered an *Efficient*, but only as an *Instrumental Cause* in the Production of his Off-spring; and consequently, if his Off-spring be, *indeed*, sent into the World with this ill Quality belonging to them, it is not *Adam*, but *that Being who produced Us by Him*, that is, in Strictness of Speech, the Cause or Author of it. In plain Terms, Let our Common Nature (I mean that, which We have from the Birth) be what it will, it is *such* a Nature, as We received from God; for  
it

SERM. it is *He*, and not any Other Parent, whether immediate or remote, that *made* it ;  
 III. and consequently, if this Nature be Morally ill, God Himself, by necessary Deduction, must be the Author of that Ill. But, before so exceptionable a Constitution is in good Earnest received for true, We should do well to enquire, Whether it is likely to do *Honour* to God, or is consistent with that All-perfect Character, which all Religion, whether Natural or Revealed, ascribe to him ; I mean, That *He is the Father of Lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect Gift*, and from whom (considering the Immutability of his Nature) Nothing, that is opposite to Good, can be derived ?

BUT, having guarded against our derogating from the Honour of God in *Theory*, We should remember, That the *greatest* Honour We can do Him, is that which consists in Practice. Do We, indeed, regard Him as *the Father of Lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect Gift* ? Let us *treat* Him as such, by contemplating and copying His Perfections, by revering His Authority, by trusting in His



His Power and Goodness, and, in a Word, SERM.  
by a fixed and steady Conformity of Con- III.

duct to his Laws, and Dispensations, as  
being all most just and wise, and calculated to promote our highest Good.  
' *Great and marvellous are thy Works, O*  
' *Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy*  
' *Ways, O King of Saints! Who would not*  
' *fear and glorify thy Name?* Who would  
not cheerfully embark in the Service of *so*  
*good* and excellent a Master? Who would  
not acquiesce in that All-wise Disposal,  
which carves out for Us infinitely better  
than We could do for Ourselves? Who  
would not apply every Power, and Dispensation,  
and Law, that comes from Him, to its proper Use,  
by extracting from it that *Moral Good*, which He intended  
should be produced by it? *So* shall We  
best express that Esteem which We have  
for God, when found in *Fact* not to oppose,  
but, if I may so say, to operate, in  
Conjunction with Him; When the Gifts  
of Reason and Revelation, when Prosperity  
and Adversity, when Life and Death,  
when all that We possess in the present  
State, and the blessed Hope and Expectation

SERM. tion of that which is to come, ALL;  
III. so far as our Choice and Agency are concerned, are improved aright, and all converted to that *End* or *Use*, for which they were appointed by Him, *i. e.* in order to our becoming *wiser* and *better* Men, and in order to our Growth in those good and virtuous Habits, on which our real Dignity, Perfection, and Happiness depend.

*To Him be Glory, &c.*

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SERM.

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S E R M O N IV.

The Sufficiency of Natural Religion presupposed by the first Defenders of Christianity.

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ACTS xvii. 28.

----- *As certain also of your own Poets have said, For we are also his Off-spring.*

**I**F the Principles, on which We build, SERM. IV. are wrong, the more *consistently* We either act, or reason upon Them, the more We are misled. This Observation is *universal*; the *Learned* themselves are not an Exception from it.

ST. *Luke* affords Us a remarkable Instance of this Kind, in that Part of His History, which ushers in the Text. He had now brought Our Apostle, in the Course



SERM. Course of his Ministerial Labours, to *A-*

IV. *thens*, a City, as much distinguished above  
 the Rest of *Greece* for its Idolatrous Prac-  
 tices, as it was for the Culture of Arts and  
 Sciences. *The Lacedemonians* had got the  
 Start in Military Skill and Courage. But  
*Athens* was the Nurse of Philosophy, and  
 Patroness of the Muses. Her Theology  
 kept Pace with Her other Pursuits; and,  
 as She surpassed Her Sister-states in *Human*  
 Literature, She was ambitious of the like  
 Preheminence in the Divine.

ACCORDINGLY We are told, in the  
 Beginning of the Paragraph, That, whilst  
*Paul waited at Athens, His Spirit was stir-*  
*red in Him, when He saw the City wholly*  
*given to Idolatry.*

A JUST Displeasure might well be excited  
 in His Breast, by that Circumstance alone;  
 but, I suppose, What increased his Pain,  
 was the *Reputation* of the Place, and the  
 Influence it might have upon its Neigh-  
 bours. In this Situation, it could not be  
 expected, that the Apostle's Zeal should  
 confine itself within the *Synagogue* of the  
*Jews*, or among the few Profelytes They  
 had made from *Paganism*. He seizes a  
 Liberty,

Liberty, in those Days not unusual with SERM.  
Men of Letters. He appears in the open IV.  
*Market*, and disputes in Places of most  
public Resort.

UPON which, We are informed, That certain Philosophers of the *Epicureans* and *Stoics* encountered Him : And the Issue of the Debate was this, That, as the Controversy was of a Religious Kind, They brought Him before one of their Courts, in which Matters relating to Religion were tried ; That very Court, in which (if I am informed aright) *Protagoras* received the Sentence of Death, for suspending his Belief of the *Pagan* Theology, and *Socrates* for explaining Himself upon it.

I SHOULD have observed, That the above-mentioned Sects, tho' uniting their Forces against the Apostle, were widely different among Themselves : The One admitting the Doctrine of a *Providence* and superintending Mind ; whilst the Other excluded the Deity from all Concern in Human Affairs, and resolved the Formation of the Universe into a *fortuitous* Concurrence of Atoms. I do not know, but a Person, well versed in the respective Te-

SERM. nets of these Philosophers, might discover

IV. *much the same Conduct*, in St. Paul's Apology here, with what He practised upon the like Occasion at *Jerusalem*. For it was no such difficult Matter, for a Man, who now stood upon his Defence, to divide an Assembly *so* circumstanced, as this, and secure that Part of His Judges, which came the nearest to the Truth, by turning the main Current of His Eloquence *against* the Other.

BUT, be that as it will, so far is certain, That, if We rectify a Mistake or two in Our Translation, there will appear an Air of good Breeding and Politeness, through the whole Discourse, not unworthy of that learned Person from whom it came, or as learned an Auditory, before whom it was delivered.

‘ YE Men of *Athens*, cries the Apostle,  
 ‘ I perceive You have distinguished Yourself  
 ‘ selves by the \* *Spirit of Devotion*. For,  
 ‘ as I passed by, and observed the *Objects*  
 ‘ of your Worship, I found an Altar with  
 ‘ this Inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN

\* *Vide* the Original.

‘ GOD.’



‘ GOD. Now this God, whom You SERM.  
 ‘ profess to revere, tho’, by Your own IV.  
 ‘ Confession, not so well acquainted with  
 ‘ Him, do I declare unto You.’ Whatever  
 was the Occasion of this Inscription,  
 (for the Learned are divided about it) it  
 afforded the Apostle the fairest Advantage.  
 If this Altar was, indeed, erected in Ho-  
 nour of the true God, St. Paul’s Reason-  
 ing upon it will come with a double  
 Force. But if otherwise, He dexterously  
 enough presses Their *Superstition* into the  
 Service of His Cause, and, by an uncom-  
 mon Address, introduces the Truth in *that*  
 Way, that would give least Offence to  
 the Prejudices of His Hearers.

UPON this He proceeds to observe, in  
 direct Opposition to the Scheme of *Epicu-  
 rus*, That, as God is the supreme *Author*  
 and Lord of the Universe, He cannot be  
*circumscribed*, or dwell in Temples made with  
*Hands*; nor should We ascribe to Him a  
 corporeal Form. That God is so far from  
 neglecting (as *Epicurus* imagined) the Go-  
 vernment of the World, that, on the Con-  
 trary, as He *has made of one Blood* the  
 whole Human Species, so He *has deter-*

SERM. *mined the Times before appointed, and*

IV. *Bounds of Their Habitation; Nay more,*  
*has appointed a Day, in which He will judge*  
*the World in Righteousness, by that Man*  
*whom He has ordained, whereof He has gi-*  
*ven Us an Assurance, in that He has raised*  
*Him from the Dead.*

BUT above All, We should not overlook that truly just and most Catholic Sentiment, which immediately precedes the Text, where, after having observed How God, in His Course of Providence, had so ordered Things, as might best *facilitate* Our Enquiry after Him, He adds, *Not that He is far from Any of Us.* I would not (as much as to say) be so understood, as if the Knowledge of God were a *difficult* \* Thing to come at. When I spoke of Men's *Feeling* after God, it was only with Reference to the comparative Darknefs and Ignorance of the Times, in which Idolatry prevailed, not that God, in Reality, is *far from any Individual of Us: For in Him We live, and move, and have our Being.*

\* We have the same beautiful Correction in another of St. Paul's Apologies, *Not that He left Himself without a Witness.*

*As Certain also of Your own Poets have said, SERM.  
For We are also His Off-spring. IV.*

THUS doth St: Paul, in *His* Defence of Christianity, revive those just Conceptions, which the Light of Nature taught Us to form of God. He does not (with *Epicurus*) confine Him to a particular Place, or describe Him under a Human Form; He does not suppose Him *withdrawn* from Mankind, and locked up in His own Enjoyment, but represents Him, as the *Common* Parent, that has the Welfare of all His Children at Heart, and has, accordingly, as well provided for Their Tutorage and Instruction in former Ages, as under the Christian Dispensation.

IN my *first* Discourse on this Subject, We enquired, If God had not sufficiently provided for the Instruction of the *Gentile* World, by the Works of Nature. And as this Discourse is only a Continuation of the former, I will beg Leave to handle it in the *same* Way, I mean, by waving the usual Forms of Enlargement, and by prosecuting the Argument in a more free and unconfin'd Manner.



SERM. ALL Revelation *presupposes* the Quar-  
 IV. ter from whence it comes. It is therefore  
 grounded on the Being and Attributes of  
 God.

IF Natural Religion therefore be the true Ground-work of Revelation, no Wonder so wise an *Architect*, as St. Paul, should own it, and *build* His Superstructure upon it.

OUR Apostle lays His Foundation here. He begins with the first and most fundamental Article of all Religion, I mean, the Doctrine of the *One* God and *Father* of the Universe. And, as this Doctrine is demonstrable by the Light of Nature, He treats it accordingly. He treats, I say, the Existence of a God, and His Creating the World, as apparent to the Eye of Reason, Truths that carry Their own Evidence along with Them, and want only to be *considered*, in order to be received.

FOR He does not so much as offer at any Proof of *these* Points, as He does, when, in the Sequel of His Discourse, He proceeds to a *peculiar* Doctrine of Revelation. That God should create the World, was so plain an Article of Natural Religion,

on, that He contents Himself with the bare Assertion ; He ventures it alone, as able to shift for itself. But that God should judge the World by *Jesus Christ*, was Something absolutely new, and for that Reason required to be better flanked and guarded. No sooner is this Proposition advanced, but it is immediately enforced with a Proof, *Whereof He has given us an Assurance* (or Proof) *in that He raised Him from the Dead.*

INDEED, in the former Case, He appeals to Their Own *Poets*, but not as so many Proofs or Authorities ; All that He intends by it, is to shew that these Points of Natural Religion are so plain and obvious, as to approve Themselves to the Eye of Reason, unassisted by Revelation: The Light of Nature (as Our Ancient Apologists well observe) ‘ having drawn ‘ from the *Gentile* Writers a Confession of ‘ these Truths, which Our Religion has ‘ in common with that of Nature.’

BUT We are not indebted to *Them*, for this Remark ; St. *Paul* led Them the Way in it ; and, since it throws no small Light on the Subject under Consideration, it may

SERM. be worth Our While to insist more at  
IV. Large upon it.

ST. *Paul*, indeed, contents Himself with a short transient Hint, and That was enough before a learned *Athenian* Court, well versed in the Writings of Their Own Poets. But, if, We, at this Distance of Time, would see into the full Force of His Citation, We must take in the whole Paragraph. Only premising this, That the Poet *Aratus* (for to Him the Apostle appeals) treats of the One God and Father, under a *Gentile* Name ; A Circumstance that does not affect our Argument, which turns not upon the different *Names* or Appellations given to God, but upon those *Ideas* and Apprehensions, which the Writer formed of Him.

HIS Words are These :

- ‘ With *Jove* begin the Song.
- ‘ Him should we never leave unsung.
- ‘ All Courts, all Places of Resort,
- ‘ Heaven and Seas are fill’d with *Jove*.’

AND then, after having observed, Our constant Dependence upon Him, He adds,  
‘ For We are also his Off-spring.’ It should have been observed, That the  
Poem,



Poem, to which these Lines are prefixed, SERM.  
is of the *Astronomic* Kind. It consists of IV.

an Account of the Heavenly Bodies. And accordingly the Writer gives Us to understand, How God had placed these bright Luminaries over Our Heads, to mark out for Us the Succession of Times, and grateful Revolution of Seasons. And then, observing How the *Favour* of this God is the *first*, and the *last* Thing that We should be ambitious to secure, He breaks out into that noble Apostrophe, ' Hail ' Father, the great *Wonder*, and as great ' a *Good* to Men !'

BUT St. *Paul* expresses Himself in the Plural Number, *As Certain of your own Poets have said*. And therefore in Justice (as well to the Apostle, as to our present Argument) We must proceed in Our Quotations.

IF We may credit Antiquity, the *Athenian Stage* has had some Truths told upon it, perhaps, too dangerous to be uttered in Their Temples.

SOPHOCLES, the Pride and Glory of the *Græcian Drama*, does (as *Clemens* *Alex.*

SERM. *Alexandrinus* relates) in a Piece of his  
IV. since lost, exprefs Himself as follows:

‘ In Truth, there is but One, One only  
‘ God,  
‘ Who fram’d the Heav’n, and the wide  
‘ Earth,  
‘ The Sea’s high-swelling Surge, and force-  
‘ ful Wind.  
‘ But We, vain Mortals, greatly erring,  
‘ In Solace of our Woe, have form’d  
‘ Statues of Gods, of Stone and Brass,  
‘ Of Gold and Iv’ry Forms.  
‘ And, if to These We pay the solemn  
‘ Rights,  
‘ We think it true Devotion.’

*EURIPIDES*, the next in Reputa-  
tion to Him, when speaking of the *Self-*  
*existent* (for He uses *that* Kind of Phraeo-  
logy) represents His Influence, ‘ shed like  
‘ a plenteous *Shower* upon all Natures,’

AND then subjoins,

‘ Round Him the Day, round Him the  
‘ Night’s brown Shade, and endless Train  
‘ of Stars perform their constant Dance.’

THE *Poets* are a Set of Writers that deal  
much in Fiction, but then Their *Art* itself  
obliges Them so to manage Their Fictions,

as to make them carry some *Resemblance* of Truth. The Rules of Order, *Symmetry*, and Proportion cannot be dispensed with here ; and, therefore, I do not wonder to find that, after They had wantonly enough introduced a whole Crowd of Imaginary Deities, They still took Care to reduce Them under *One* Supreme.

SERM.  
IV.

SUCH was the Doctrine of the antient *Orpheus*.

IN the Confession of the *Gentile* Writers, He held but One *first* Principle, or Sovereign Mind, and, though possibly Our learned Apologists were mistaken in ascribing to Him that masterly Performance, that went under His Name, yet it is evident that it speaks His Sentiments.

THE Author (whether it be *Orpheus* Himself, or some *Pythagorean* Sage mistaken for Him) advises *Musæus*, for to Him the Poem is addressed, ‘ To *purge* his Soul  
‘ from former Errors, and *ascend* through  
‘ the Scale of Being, till He arrives at the  
‘ *sole* Monarch of the World ; and then adds, ‘ There is but One Selfexistent, and  
‘ all Things are produced of One — pre-  
‘ sent



SERM. 'sent to All, though hid from Mortal  
IV. 'Eyes.'

As fabulous a Writer as *Hesiod* is, and, though, doubtless, He bore his Part in *corrupting* the Religion of Nature, He could not get rid of this selfevident Maxim, 'that There is but One *Supreme* Monarch of the Universe; nor can Another vie with Thee.'

AND as to the Father-Poet, though not always consistent with Himself, Yet We must not overlook that Remark, which St. *Justin* has made upon Him. 'Homer, says He, by his Golden Chain, ascribes to the One, and *first* God, the Authority and Power over all the Rest.' And, truly, a Golden Chain, suspended from the Throne of *Jupiter*, is no improper *Emblem* of the Universe; it represents well enough the *gradual* Rise in the Scale of Beings, Their mutual Connexions and Relations, with Their *common* Dependence on the *first* Cause.

I NEED not tell You, How close the Prince of the *Latin* Poets treads in the Former's Steps, though writing at so great a Distance of Time from Him. And His

*Lyric*

*Lyric* Cotemporary, in One of His *Odes*, SERM.  
tells Us, ' That, agreeable to the Custom IV.

' of His Ancestors, He would celebrate  
' that Universal *Parent*, who superintends  
' the Affairs of Gods and Men, and go-  
' verns the Earth and Seas, and Universe.  
' There is Nothing produced, *greater* than  
' Him, Nothing that is simular, or *equal*  
' to Him.'

AND, to say no more, when the famous  
*Cato* had arrived with the Relics of *Pbar-*  
*salia*, near the Temple of *Jupiter Ammon*,  
and was advised by *Labienus* to consult the  
Oracles, He has *such* Sentiments as these  
put into His Mouth by the Poet *Lucan* :

' Why do You put Me upon *Enquiry*,  
' Whether We should choose to die in a  
' State of Freedom, or live to see Our  
' *Country* enslaved ? Whether this Mortal  
' Life be only a *Remora* to a more last-  
' ing One ? Whether Violence can *hurt* a  
' good Man ? Whether Virtue does not  
' make Us *superior* to Misfortunes ? And  
' Whether true Glory depends upon Suc-  
' cess ? We know these Truths already,  
' and the Oracle cannot give Us clearer  
' Answers,

SERM. 'Answers, than what *God* makes us feel  
IV. 'every Moment.'

WHILE such noble Sentiments as these, could come from a *Pagan* Pen, We shall not want for Materials to approve the *Justness* of St. Paul's Reflexion, *He left not Himself without a Witness!*

BUT, if Antiquity can boast of so much Truth amongst Her Poets, What may We not expect from Her Philosophers? The Former are well known to interweave the *Fable* in their Compositions, whilst the Latter assume a more *venerable* Form, and are, by their very Profession, Friends of Wisdom, and Enquirers after Truth. And, indeed, when I consider what ample Materials were provided to the Apostle's Hand from this *Quarter*, I do not know, how better to account for His *superfeding* Them, if not upon One of these two Suppositions, either That some *Prudential* Considerations forbad His citing Them, or That He judged his Point more *abundantly* gained by referring His Hearers to the least considerable Writers of the Two.

SHOULD it be objected, That some of these *Grecian* Sages travelled into the *East*,  
and



and that, considering Their Abilities and Thirst after Knowledge, We have no Reason to believe They returned *empty* Home. SERM.  
IV.

ALLOWED.—But What, though *some* improved their Stock of Knowledge in this Way, Will it follow, that all either did, or could, do so? Besides, Are the chief Lines of Duty, the *Magna Moralia*, so poorly provided for, that Men could not come at Them, unless They left Their respective Countries to consult the Disciples of *Zoroaster* or Priests of *Osiris*? If (with *St. Paul*) We believe, that the *First Cause* is *not far from Any of Us*, We are under no Necessity of crossing the Seas to find Him; and, though We should concede That *some* Truths are imported from Abroad, Will it follow, That we have None of the *Home Growth*? Was Our *Native Soil* so bad, that, with all our Care and Culture, it was not capable of any Produce?

HAD the Author of Nature made His Sun to shine only upon Our single Country, or confined to That the Rains from Heaven and fruitful Seasons, the Case would have been deplorable, indeed, with all the Rest: But, if these Blessings of His  
are

SERM. are dealt *promiscuously* amongst us All, the  
 IV. Apostle's Argument will be as *Universal*  
 too, That He left not Himself without a  
 Witness, in that He did Us Good, giving  
 Us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Sea-  
 sons.

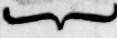
WAS the *Volume* of Nature open on-  
 ly upon the Banks of the Nile or *Jor-*  
*dan*? Or, Shall We not rather say with  
 the *Psalmist*, that these Means of Instruc-  
 tion were of General Use: *Their Line*  
*is gone forth through all the Earth, and their*  
*Words to the End of the World?*

BUT it is Time to dismiss the Argu-  
 ment, were it only to make Way for  
 some *Practical* Reflexions. And Here,  
 it may not be improper to observe, that  
 Not only our Behaviour towards God Him-  
 self will be in some Measure affected, ac-  
 cording as We do, or do not, take Care to  
 form right Conceptions of Him, but even  
 in *common* Life, how just and reasonable  
 soever Virtue is in itself, it acquires a *new*  
 Force from the Quarter of Religion, and  
 is greatly invigorated by a just Idea of  
 God.

IN Proof of This, We need only draw SERM.  
this Comparifon between the Scheme of IV.  
*Epicurus* and that of *Chrift*. The For-  
mer, by cutting off all Communication  
with a Deity, has overthrown Religion,  
and by that Means *weakened* the Cause of  
Virtue. The Latter fecures them Both.  
Had We been caft upon a Univerfe, deſti-  
tute of its *Guardian* Power and proper  
Head ; Had We moved and acted in the  
Midft of a System from which the *ſupreme*  
Manager was withdrawn, I ſuppoſe, the  
Face of Things muſt have appeared as diſ-  
conſolate and gloomy, as They would be  
monſtrous and deformed ; and, no Won-  
der, if ſo prepoſterous a State of Things  
ſhould have a *ſimilar* Effect upon Our  
Minds and Conduct. But, if the Contrary  
of This be true, if it be true of the Hu-  
man Species, that *We are All his Off-ſpring* ;  
if the Earth, on which We tread, is full  
of his Goodneſs ; if *the Heavens* (over our  
Heads) *declare the Glory of the Lord, and*  
*the Firmament ſheweth forth his Handy-*  
*Work* ; if in *Wiſdom* and Goodneſs *He has*  
*made* them all, if We are able to diſcern  
the *Prints* of theſe and the like amiable



SERM. Attributes, wherever We turn Our Eyes ;

IV.  if His Favour and Protection are engaged for the Support of the *Righteous*, and His Mildness and Forbearance most wonderfully exercised toward the *Wicked*, affording Them Time, and Means, and Power to repent ; and if (after Our Virtue and Fidelity have been *approved* in the present World) We are assured of the most rich and glorious Reward in the next, Who does not perceive, How great an Encouragement all This affords to the Practice of Piety towards God, and Good-Will to Men ?

S E R M.

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## S E R M O N V.

The Sufficiency of Natural Religion presupposed by the first Defenders of Christianity.

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ROM. ii. 14.

*For, when the Gentiles, which have not a Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law, These, not having a Law, are a Law to Themselves.*

**W**HOEVER has a just Sense SERM.  
V.  
of Deity, will treat, with  
Reverence, Whatever Con-  
stitution is known to come from thence;  
and a Friend of Virtue would not willingly  
decry That, which is necessary to its  
very Subsistence: For these Reasons We  
should speak with Caution, when treating  
G 2 of

SERM.

V.

of our common Nature, whether We regard it as the Workmanship of God on the One Hand, or as That, on which our Moral Agency is built on the Other.

THESE are the two principal Pleas in its Behalf; and St. *Paul* has shewn Us the Way in the Use of Both: That Apostle had laid down this General Position, That *God will render to Every Man, according to His Works*, and He inforces it with a Reason taken from the Divine Impartiality, *For there is no Respect of Persons with God*. Upon this Principle He observes, That all bad Men will be condemned, whether they have lived under a Revelation, or not: *As Many as have sinned without a Law, shall perish without a Law*; This relates to Sinners amongst the *Gentiles*: And *As Many as have sinned under the Law, shall be judged by the Law*; This relates to Sinners amongst the *Jews*. And then, after having obviated a tacit Objection from the Quarter of the *Jews*, He resumes that Part of the Argument, which relates to the *Gentiles* in the Text, *For, when the Gentiles, which have not a Law, do by Nature the Things*



*Things contained in the Law, These, not having a Law, are a Law to Themselves.* SERM. V.

As therefore the Sinners amongst the *Jews*, how much soever distinguished by Their National Privileges, were not placed above a Divine Censure; so neither were the Sinners amongst the *Gentiles* placed below it; but, on the Contrary, Both were alike accountable to God. Nature itself in a Sense being That, to Mankind in Common, which a Law or Revelation from Heaven was to the *Jews*. It was so in the Apostle's Judgment, so far as relates to the Point in Hand, I mean, as it supplied Them with a Rule of Action, and obliges Us to consider Them as Subjects capable of Reward and Punishment.

THUS Our Apostle, agreeably to His known Wisdom, does Justice to One Truth, without injuring Another; He does not set the Gifts of God at *Variance*; nor, like some injudicious *Panegyrist*, build the Cause of Revelation on the Ruins of Natural Religion.

To make Brick without Straw is alike unreasonable, under any Government,

SERM. whether Divine or Human ; though the  
 V. Hardship would become so much the  
 { greater in the former Case, as the Penalty  
 by Supposition is greater. If therefore  
 the Supreme Master does really insist up-  
 on Our common Working, I must infer  
 with St. *Paul*, That He has as universally  
 supplied Us with sufficient Materials for  
 it.

BUT, since a Point of so much Con-  
 sequence in Religion should not be treated  
 in a superficial Way, let Us descend still  
 deeper into it. We will examine that  
 Part of the Divine Workmanship, which  
 belongs to the Human Nature, and, by  
 taking a Survey of Our inward Furniture,  
 see, What Kind of Aspect it has upon  
 the Practice of Virtue.

THOUGH, to prevent Mistake, I must  
 premise a Caution, That, how good soe-  
 ver the Quarry may be in itself, This does  
 not preclude the Polishing of the Stone,  
 or Marble, that is taken from it, and  
 Whatever I shall advance concerning Our  
 Natural Powers, is not designed to preclude  
 any After-Care, Culture, or Tutorage,  
 whether Divine or Human. Nature should  
 not

not suffer, but improve upon Our Hands; and, the better to inforce this wholesome Discipline, it should be considered, In how many Instances Nature submits to be formed by Art. A good Genius is no Loser by being reduced under proper Rule; and, if We transfer the Argument from the Literate to the Moral World, We shall find the same Observation hold good there. But, after all, how different soever the *Greek* and *Barbarian* may be upon some Accounts, there is one *common* Nature in which Both agree; and if, by the Force of This, Mankind, though unassisted by Revelation, can *do the Things contained in the Law, i. e.* are capable of the good and virtuous Practice, it remains to enquire, What Provision the Author of Nature has made for it.

*IN the first Place,* God has bestowed on Mankind in Common the Power or Faculty of Judgment, by which We are able to distinguish between the Moral Good and Ill, to discern Something of a Beauty and Proportion in the One, and as real a Deformity in the Other.



SERM. THAT this Natural Talent might not  
V. lie unimproved, He has thrown in a cer-  
tain Appetite or Desire of Knowledge ;  
and, the End of Knowledge being Prac-  
tice, that He might the better recommend  
the Practice of what is right, and dehort  
Us from the Practice of what is ill, He has  
annexed an honest Joy and Complacence  
of Mind to the One, and as sensible a  
Pain or Displacence to the Other. But, lest  
this inward Judgment, which every One  
passes upon His Own Conduct, should  
not always suffice, He has taken Care to  
flank and inforce it with another Principle,  
which belongs more or less to Our com-  
mon Nature, I mean that Regard We  
bear to the Judgment that is passed upon  
Us by Other Beings ; There is a secret  
Satisfaction of Soul, which arises from  
Their Approbation or Praise, and as ex-  
quisite a Sense of Shame and Uneasiness  
from Their Censure ; except in that Case,  
where They pass a wrong Judgment upon  
Us, and here, the better to secure the virtu-  
ous Principle, the Consciousness of our own  
Integrity does more than counter-balance  
the external Censure ; Thus the Desire of  
being

being commended is a Natural Incitement to do such Things as are commendable, and the Fear of Blame is a Kind of Natural Dissuasive from doing such Things as are blame-worthy. SERM. V.

BESIDES the Principles or Passions already mentioned, it should be considered, How great is the Force of Natural Affection, and how these *soft* and tender Workings of Nature, if reduced under proper Regulations, are productive of much Good.

LET it be enquired still further, What Kind of Emotion we feel within, at the Sight of Distress, or under the Reception of a Benefit ; the One prompting to Acts of Goodness, and the Other, by Way of Return, increasing and multiplying the Moral Good.

NOR are the *rough* and boisterous Passions without their Use ; Our Anger, when directed on its proper Object, and brought under the Conduct of Reason, *i. e.* if it be such an Anger, as moves within the Bounds and Limits prescribed by Our common Nature, is far more eligible than a

*Stoical*

SERM. *Stoical Apathy* ; as might be shewn in  
V. several Instances.

ABOVE All, that Strength of Will, which, in Subjects not yet arrived at the Use of Reason, discovers itself in so much Stubbornness and Renitency, shews, That We are not, like so much *lumpish* Matter, obliged to follow the Direction of Every impelling Force, but have a Principle of Action within Ourselves, That we are Agents in the strict and proper Sense of the Word ; and, if so, when the Principle of Reason comes to exert itself, We shall be capable of doing the Moral Good or Ill. That Man is, in the Sense assigned, *Lord* of Himself ; He has it in His Own Option, which Way to act, nor is He a mere Tool or Passive Instrument made Use of by Another ; but, as He Himself is the Cause or Author of the Act, He stands accountable for the Moral Good or Ill which accompanies it.

SUCH is that Original Make or Constitution of Nature, which Every Man, who is a Subject of Moral Government, brings with Him into the World ; Such the Gifts and Talents which We have from God,  
and



and which, in Justice to Him, We should not overlook, much less despise and run Them down, as Things of Nought, or worse than Nought, lest, by so doing, We should not only contract the Guilt of *Ingratitude* towards Our Maker, but, in Effect, explain away Our Moral Agency, and sap the Foundations of all Religion, whether Natural or Revealed: For, if no Man in the Use of Reason is excused from His Master's Service, if the Obligation extends in Common to All, there must be some common Capacity, on which it is built; and, after all the Distinctions of Age, Country, or Profession are set aside, Where shall that Capacity be found, unless, with *St. Paul*, We place it in Our *common* Nature? God, as an ancient\* Commentator well observes upon the Text, 'has made Man sufficiently qualified for the Choice of Virtue, and the Flight of Evil.' And, that We might not confine this Reflexion to our first Parents, but understand it of all their Off-spring, 'Do not wonder, says He, that *St. Paul* should frequently suggest as much, re-

\* *St. Chrysostom.*

SERM.

V.

‘ferring to the Force or Power of Nature;  
 ‘for it was a Point of the utmost Consequence to the Christian Cause; as it  
 ‘serves to obviate an Objection, that otherwise might be raised against Us;  
 ‘for it will be said, Why did not *Christ* appear before? Or, How came it to pass  
 ‘that the *same* Provision was not made for Mankind in former Ages? To obviate this Objection, Our Apostle observes, That, in the most ancient Times, and before the Giving of the Law, the Human Nature enjoyed all proper Care; What is to be known of God, was manifested to Them, and They understood the Difference of Good and Evil.’ I must frankly confess Myself to be of the same Mind with this ancient Writer; I think, with St. *Chrysostom*, it is a Point in which the Honour of God and the Cause of Christianity are deeply concerned; and not to allow as much as He does to the Author of Nature, is in Effect to injure the One, and weaken, if not overthrow the Defence of the Other.

BUT should it be still suspected, That there is Something amiss, and Morally defective,

fective in Our Make, let that Something SERM.  
be produced, and be well discussed; for, V.

if it be true of the Works of God, That *in Wisdom* He has *made Them All*, perhaps, that very Thing, which, at first Sight, is imagined to be a Blemish, may, upon a more strict and careful Examination, turn up a real Beauty. I must, therefore, put the Question again, Which of All these Powers or Movements of Nature, that have been mentioned (add, if You please, any Other that are from Nature) partake of the Moral Ill? I had almost said, Where is that Weight or Movement, that may, with Safety, be taken off, and the whole Machine not suffer by its Absence? Shall that Faculty be resigned, by which We distinguish between the Moral Good and Ill? How then shall Our Moral Agency be preserved? Shall We part with the Desire of Knowledge, and that sweet Surprise, which accompanies the Discovery of Truth? But, Why must this Affection be given up, which is innocent in itself, and implanted in Us for good and valuable Ends? Much less can that Pain, or Pleasure, be spared,  
which



SERM. which is excited by the Judgment passed  
 V. on the Human Conduct, whether by the  
 { Man Himself, or by Other Beings : Be-  
 cause a Principle, or Passion, of this Kind,  
 appears to be a Fence to Virtue ; and,  
 though itself distinct from the Moral  
 Good, it is no weak or trivial Inforce-  
 ment of it. Will not the same Remark  
 hold true of Natural Affection ? Of Pity ?  
 And the strong Tendency in Nature,  
 which the Reception of a Benefit has to  
 beget a Love for the Benefactor's Person ?

WHAT Man, that considers, How fair  
 a Ground-work is here laid by God, but  
 will confess, That there ought in Reason  
 to be as fair a Superstructure raised upon  
 it ?

LET Our real Make and Constitution  
 be well considered, I mean That which  
 every Man brings with Him into the  
 World, before it is debauched and cor-  
 rupted by evil Principles and Customs,  
 and We shall find the Human Race to be  
 a Set of Beings formed, not for those Prac-  
 tices which are opposite to Reason, for that  
 Reason, which constitutes Our common  
 Nature, protests against Them ; We are  
 not

not turned for Acts of Fraud, Cruelty, and Injustice ; for Nature stiffly opposes All such unreasonable Pleasures ; nor can these Sins be committed by Us, unless We have first offered no small Violence to Ourselves. We are made for the Practice of Goodness, Humanity, and Mercy ; at These Nature points, and from These Nature derives Her choicest Pleasures.

WE are not calculated by Nature for the Love of Ignorance and Error ; but so fashioned as those Beings should be, that are designed for the Search of Truth. We are therefore born for Truth, Virtue, and Religion ; for the acting a goodly and well-proportioned Part, in the several Spheres and Stations, in which We are placed ; these Things are not contrary to that Nature which God has given Us, but congenial to it.

NAY more, so great is the Force of Nature, that, after All the Attempts made to turn it aside, it will recoil upon Us ; it will extort, at Times, from the Worst of Men, a Confession of a quite different Kind

SERM. Kind from Their Practice ; They will own  
 V. the Charms of Virtue, and applaud, in  
 Another, that very Goodness and Recti-  
 tude, which, in Compliance with some  
 inordinate Desire, or unnatural Passion,  
 They violate in Themselves. Nor can  
 They reconcile Themselves to Their  
 own ill Practice with Ease : Much  
 Art and Management are required, and  
 many a *specious* Pretext must be advanced,  
 to colour over the ill Practice, and hide  
 the proper Deformity of Vice from View;  
 otherwise Their Own Judgment would  
 protest against it, and Nature itself, by  
 the Voice of Conscience, create those A-  
 larms within, as must either prevent the  
 Commission of the Sin, or retrench the  
 Pleasure that was proposed by it, and on  
 either Foot clear itself of all Suspicion of  
 being accessary to it. A Man must have  
 made considerable Progress in the School  
 of Vice, before He can have suppressed  
 all Opposition from this Quarter ; it is a  
 Work of Time, to acquire this Mastery  
 over Nature, if a compleat Mastery can  
 be gained at all ; for Nature has still a  
 strong



strong Party within ; and the Worst of SERM.  
Men have their *lucid* Intervals ; and tho', V.  
possibly, They can brave it out, against  
the Reproof of Others, They cannot so  
easily get rid of this *inward* Monitor, and  
stifle the Remonstrance of Their Own  
Minds. However, should any One have  
acquired this Art of Sinning at perfect  
Ease, let this Effect be ascribed to its  
proper Cause. He must take the whole  
Honour of it upon Himself ; He is self-  
abused, and self-depraved ; in vain does  
He think to excuse his Corruption of  
Nature, by fathering it upon Another's  
Conduct, the true Cause of the Corrup-  
tion is His Own.

I would not leave any Thing, that  
may appear a Difficulty, untouched ; and,  
therefore, it must be observed on the O-  
ther Hand, That We come under the Law  
of Mortality from the Birth ; That the  
first Impressions, made upon Us, are purely  
of the Sensitive Kind ; and as, in diffe-  
rent Men, We meet with different Con-  
stitutions, so one Set of Animal Humours  
or Juices may dispose to one Kind of Vices,  
and Another to Another.

SERM. BUT then, in Reply to these Things,  
 V. it should be observed, That the Moral  
 { Good cannot in Reason be expected from  
 Us, before the Moral Agency takes Place ;  
 That there is no Moral Ill, either in the  
 Body itself, or in those Impressions,  
 which the Latter by the Law of Union  
 makes upon the Mind ; because in These  
 We are purely Passive, whereas the Mo-  
 ral Ill, from the Nature of the Thing,  
 must be the Result of Our Own Choice  
 or Will ; and, since both our Common  
 Mortality, with those Impressions which  
 the Soul receives from a Body so and  
 so circumstanced, are Both grounded in  
 the Will of God, We are obliged, in Jus-  
 tice to Him, to believe, That this very  
 Constitution of Things, if We are not  
 wanting to Ourselves, will turn up to  
 the Advantage of the Cause of Virtue.  
 And indeed, in how many Instances do  
 We find the Animal Oeconomy to assist  
 the virtuous Principle, when concurring  
 with it, or so much the more *enhance*  
 and ennoble it, where it happens to op-  
 pose it. Above All, as the Strength of  
 Passions, and Animal Appetite, constitutes  
 one

one Part of Our present Trial, so, doubtless, God in His great Goodness, will make all proper Allowances, for Whatever Impediment or Obstacle may arise from Hence ; nor does the Author of Nature want to be informed of that previous Start, and Ascendancy, which Both may gain, before the Principle of Reason is yet capable of exerting itself for Our Relief. Though, after All, With what Face or Colour of Argument can any One pretend, that He has not a Power to controul His Appetite or Passion upon a *good* Principle, when, in Fact, He so frequently does it, upon an indifferent or bad One? How often do We find One Passion ballanced by Another, and Men sacrifice their Resentment, or Love of Ease, to Avarice, or Ambition?—The very Fear of Shame is, in many Cases, a sufficient Barrier against the strongest Movements of Animal Nature. And, if so, By what Reason, shall We suppose a Necessity of offending in the One Case, when the Power of Will and Native Liberty appear so strong and vigorous from the Other.



SERM.

V.

It must be owned, That both the Passions and Appetites are capable of Abuse: But We cannot affirm Them to be in Nature criminal, without offending against all Religion, whether Natural or Revealed. If there be not an Anger clear of Sin, What tolerable Sense shall We affix to that Apostolic Distinction, *Be angry, and sin not* ? And, if our Animal Appetites be not innocent, in the Judgment of the Prophetic Spirit, How came the Spirit to make this One Criterion or Mark of the great Apostacy, That They should forbid to marry, and command to abstain from Meats. If God has said to the Human Race, *Increase and multiply*, What Judgment shall We pass upon that Opinion, which supposes the Moral Ill to be propagated in the self-same Way with the Human Species, and so charges the very Institution of God with being the Medium or Channel of transmitting Sin ? How much wiser would it be to spare at least the Divine Constitution, and try, if We cannot place the Origin of Evil Somewhere else ? How much wiser would it be, instead of Undervaluing the *Apparatus*

ratus of Nature, to estimate it aright, and thank the Father of the Universe for those excellent Gifts and Powers, which He has bestowed upon Us; to improve and cultivate the same, as well in Ourselves, as in those tender Pledges, which He has intrusted to Our Care; to act in Character; to support the Dignity of the Species; and in a Word (as We appear by Our Nature to be formed for Truth, Virtue, and Religion) not to prostitute such noble Powers and Talents to the Service of Error and Drudgery of Sin? *Grapes, We are told, are not gathered from Thorns, nor Figs from Thistles; And, should Our common Humanity belong to no better a Class, How could it bring forth the goodly Fruits of the Text? But after All, How generous soever the Plant is in itself, it may greatly suffer, as I before observed, for Want of Culture, and its After-Growth be stunted, if destitute of necessary Tendance, and not enjoying a proper Soil.*

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## S E R M O N VI.

The Sufficiency of Natural Religion not contradicted by Scripture.

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PSALM. li. 5.

*Behold, I was shapen in Iniquity,  
and in Sin did my Mother conceive Me.*

SERM.  
VI.

**A** GOOD Defender of Revelation will take Care to do *Justice* to the Religion of Nature. He will observe with the *Apostle*, What Provision the Father of the Universe has made for Mankind in Common, and how the *Gentiles, who have not a Law* (or Written Rule) *do by Nature the Things contained in the Law.*

BUT, if this Remark be true, How shall We reconcile it with the Words of  
the



the Text, *Behold, I was shapen in Iniquity, &c.*? For it will be said, if the Plant or Tree be of so bad a Kind, as is represented Here, How can those goodly Fruits be expected from it? How can We do *by Nature the Things contained in the Law*, if We bring with Us into the World a *Nature* directly opposite to *Law*? What true Piety or Virtue can arise from Hence in Us, if Sin be worked up in our *very* Frame? Or, How can it be supposed We should act well Our Part in Life, if We are sent upon the Stage Morally-deformed, and Wrath-deserving?

SERM.  
VI.

*Behold, I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did My Mother conceive Me.*

THE most *simple* and uncompounded Truths carry Their Own Evidence along with Them. They are frequently seen in Their Own Light, and the Understanding converses with Them, without the Assistance of any *intervening* Medium: Not so, when We endeavour to adjust the Sense of *Words* in a Language long since out of Use, or enquire How different an Air, or Garb, any Passion would assume in an

SERM. Age and Country, removed at some considerable Distance from Our Own,

VI.

BUT, before We proceed in this Work of Criticism, it may not be amiss to observe, That the Confession, with which We are concerned, is not only of the *Penitential* Kind, but relates to a Crime of the *deepest* Dye. I need not tell You, How *great* an Offence it was for a Man obliged by his high Station to be the *Father* of his Country, and Defender of His People's Rights, to invade Them in the tenderest Point. I need not tell You, With what Eyes a Prince, not lost to all Sense of Remorse and Shame, must look back upon that Part of His Reign, in which He not only violated a gallant Subject's Bed, but (to croud one Wrong upon the Neck of another) did afterwards, in as *base* and treacherous a Manner, destroy His Life; Or, How Both these Sins admit this *farther* Aggravation of being committed at the very Time when the injured Party was not locked up in the Arms of Ease and Indolence at Home, but chearfully undergoing the Fatigues and Hardships of War, and exposing Himself in the Defence

fence of His King and Country. There is no Cause so good and sacred, but which is capable of suffering by the Misconduct of its Professors; and accordingly You will find, when the Prophet of God came to expostulate the Case with *David*, He does more than paint to Him, in the liveliest Colours, the Wrong which He had done the Man; He adds, that He had given Occasion to the *Enemies of God to blaspheme*. Such was the true State and Quality of the Fact itself; and therefore, if confessed in good Earnest by Him, You must not be surpris'd to find it done with as great a *Force* and Energy of Expression. But of This in its proper Place.

HAVING laid before You this short Detail of the History, I will now re-assume My original Plan, by enquiring, if there be any *Necessity* to fasten this Sense upon the Text, That Sin is *interwoven* in our very Nature, or That Mankind in Common are sent into the World Morally-deformed, and Wrath-deserving.

AND here I will shew, *in the first Place*, That We are under no *Necessity* of affixing this Sense to the Words themselves; much less



SERM. less if, *secondly*, They are compared with  
 VI. the *Occasion* on which They were delivered.

SHOULD any One undertake to prove from Hence, That We come into the World Morally-deformed, &c. it is not Enough for Him to tell Us, That the Words may *possibly* bear this Sense. It is incumbent upon Him to shew, not That the Words *may*, but *must* have the Sense assigned : For, till That is shewn, We are under no Necessity of receiving it, tho' We could not produce a better, much less if We can.

I THROW in the *former* Caution, for the Sake of the unlearned Part of My Hearers, who are not furnished with that Skill in Languages, which is necessary to rectify a faulty Version, or do Justice to Terms that admit of different Acceptations. But, should there be a Man present that is versed in the Original, to Him I appeal in Proof of What I am now going to offer. *Behold, I was shapen in Iniquity, &c.* I say the Term Here used, as it stands in the Original, has not any Reference to the *Formation* of the Human *Fœtus* in the Womb ; on the Contra-

ry it is borrowed from those Pangs which SERM.  
accompany the Birth. It is the self-same VI.

Word with that used by the *Psalmist* in another Place, where, treating of the Effects of Thunder, He says, *it makes the Hinds to calve*, i. e. *to cast Their Young*.

It relates, therefore, not to the Act of *Formation*, but of *Parturition*; and might, therefore, have been rendered Here, as the *Chaldee* rendered it, *I was brought forth*, &c. I might carry the same Critical Enquiry into the *Second Term*, *And in Sin did my Mother conceive Me*. For not to observe, That this Term, as it stands in the Original, may possibly signify no more than to *warm* or *cherish* as the Nurse, or Parent, does a new-born Babe: Let it suffice to observe, That neither of the Terms Here used relate to *That* Sense, on which the Vulgar Mistake is built: The *Psalmist* says Nothing Here concerning His Original *Make*, *Structure*, or *Formation* in His Mother's Womb. When He had this Act in View, He writes in a Style worthy of *that* Being to whom it belongs. He represents Himself as *curiously wrought*, and tells Us that He is *fear-*

SERM. *fearfully and wonderfully made.* He does

VI. not, through the Sides of Nature, unadvisedly strike at the God of Nature. On the Contrary He leads Us to judge of the Cause by the Effects, and would have Us infer the Goodness and Wisdom of the Divine Artist from the Excellency of the Workmanship. Nor let any One object, That He speaks This only with Reference to the *Body*; for, should That be allowed, still, if the Hand of God has laid on so much Cost on the *meaner* Part, surely it has not been wanting in the *Nobler*. And, indeed, the Scripture, in several Places, describes our common Nature as contrived and shapen, not for the Purposes of Sin, but for those nobler Pursuits of Truth, Piety, and Virtue.

It will be said then, What Sense shall We affix to the Place before Us? Here I would answer one Question by Another: What tolerable Sense shall We affix to those Words of *Job*, when, speaking of His Own charitable Disposition towards the Poor, He says, *I have guided the Widow from My Mother's Womb?* or, which comes nearer to the Point in Hand, How shall We



We expound that Reflexion, which the learned *Jews* passed upon the Person whom Our Lord had restored to Sight, *Thou wert wholly begotten in Sin, and dost Thou pretend to teach Us?* How shall We bring off David Himself, when saying in another Place, *The Wicked are estranged from the Womb, They go astray as soon as they are born speaking Lyes?* Or, What Construction shall We put upon another *Jewish* Writer, who speaking of a very degenerate Age, an Age Ripe for Destruction, says *Their Production was Evil, and Their Wickedness implanted in Them?* Let the Sense of these bold *Oriental* Phrases be adjusted Here, and, by the same Way, We may clear up the Sense of the Text. But if Words must always be expounded in their utmost Rigour, and both *Job* and *David* date their respective Qualities from the Birth, Will it not follow, That the *Virtues* of the One are as truly Natural, as the supposed Depravity of the Other? Again, if this, and the like Forms of Speech, when used by the learned *Jews* (and who, at least, must be allowed for good Masters in Their Own Language) relate only to

par-

SERM. *particular Cases, and Those too expressive*  
VI. *of some great Degree of Guilt, By what*  
*Right do We force Them into a General*  
*Rule, and so put that Construction upon*  
*Them which injures Our common Na-*  
*ture? How much safer is it to admit of a*  
*Figure in Both, than, like the Defenders*  
*of Transubstantiation, to take Advantage*  
*of the Letter to fasten that Sense upon*  
*the Scriptures, which is equally opposed*  
*both to the Reason of Things, and to si-*  
*milar Forms of Speech in other Parts of*  
*the same Writings? But after all, lest any*  
*One, who is no Friend to Revelation,*  
*should object, That this Part of the Ar-*  
*gument is built on the Style and Idiom of*  
*a Language by Few understood, We will,*  
*for His Satisfaction, transfer the Cause into*  
*another Tongue. We will take this Ex-*  
*pression from the Roman Language, at the*  
*Time when carried to its greatest Height.*  
*We will take a Master-writer of the Au-*  
*gustan Age, and who flourished under the*  
*Smiles of a Court, the then politest in the*  
*World, I mean, the Prince of the Roman*  
*Poets.*

THIS

THIS Author, when describing as strong  
a Passion as that in the Text, and this le-  
velled against a supposed hard-hearted and  
unrelenting Character, does it in the fol-  
lowing Words: 'The horrid *Caucasus*  
' (alluding to the Ridge of Hills so called)  
' brought Thee forth, and Tygers of *Hyr-*  
' *cania* gave Thee Suck.'

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Now should I, or any other Writer of  
the present Age, make Use of this Form  
of Speech to express the like savage or in-  
human Disposition, Would these Words  
be in any great Danger of being misunder-  
stood?

WHAT Man, that thinks at all, would  
take Them according to the Letter? Or,  
if He should, How just and natural it were  
to reply, That no more is intended by  
Them, than to represent an *uncommon* De-  
gree of Cruelty, by as *uncommon* a Force  
and Strength of Diction? It is not an *His-*  
*toric* Fact that is designed: But only that  
the Person, described, is as compleatly sa-  
vage, as if (comparatively speaking) He  
had breathed His first Air in the most bar-  
barous Climes, and, for Want of a better  
Nurse, had His whole Mass of Blood im-  
pregnated



SERM. pregnated with the Milk of the fiercest  
 VI. Creatures. But, if the Form of Speech,  
 or Words themselves, do not necessitate  
 the Sense *commonly* assigned, much less,  
*secondly*, the Occasion upon which They  
 were delivered, and, in Proof of This, I  
 must remind You of the History itself;  
 You will remember, How God, by the  
 Prophet *Nathan*, had denounced His Judg-  
 ments upon *David*, for this heinous Sin,  
 and enforced it with this Circumstance,  
 That He had given Occasion to the *Ene-  
 mies of the Lord to blaspheme*. Such was  
 the Situation, in which the King of *Israel*  
 stood at present, with Respect to God.  
 And tho' the Power, of which He was  
 possessed, might screen Him from *Human*  
 Judicature, that very Circumstance did but  
 so much the more illustrate the *Divine*.

God's *Impartiality* and Rectitude was  
 so much the more displayed: *Against Thee,*  
*Thee only have I sinned, and done this E-  
 vil in Thy Sight, that Thou mightest be*  
*justified, when Thou speakest, and clear,*  
*when Thou judgest.* And again, *Thou*  
*desirest Truth in the inward Parts, an*  
*outside Profession (how fair and spe-*  
*cious*

cious foever) will not suffice with Thee. Thou *requirest* that Integrity, which acts in Character, and is cautious of offending as well in Private, as in Face of Day. Such are those truly just and rational Reflexions with which My Text is flanked; and I cannot but think, They cast some Light upon it.

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HERE was the Honour of true Religion at Stake. Here was an injured Deity concerned. And, if so, well might *David* take off all the Blame from God, and place it, with all its Weight, upon Himself. Well might He abase and lay Himself low upon this Occasion: And, in the true Style of those *Antient* Times, confess His Guilt in Terms too bold and figurative, indeed, to be understood in the *utmost* Rigour, but which sufficiently conveyed, to the Reader's Mind, that humbling and affecting Sense which He had of His Own Misconduct. I could wish that any Person, who applies what is said, upon this Occasion, to *Mankind* in Common, would consider, If, by so doing, He does not counter-act the *very* End which the Writer proposed?

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I

SHOULD

SERM. SHOULD it be true, That We bring  
 VI. with Us into the World Infused Principles  
 of Sin, this Circumstance would be so far  
 from Aggravating, that, on the Contrary,  
 it *lessens* the Guilt. Now, if *David's* De-  
 sign was not to lessen His Guilt, How  
 could He insert that Circumstance, which,  
 of all Others, had the *greatest* Tendency  
 to do it.

IN this View, a judicious Writer would  
 not have inserted an *Infirmity*, that He  
 had in Common with the Rest of Man-  
 kind, much less have represented Sin as  
 grounded in Nature.

THE Sentiment, whether true or false,  
 is out of *Season* ; it counter-acts the De-  
 sign which He appears to have in View,  
 and makes Him *excuse* the ill Character  
 in that very Part of the *Psalms*, where  
 He attempts to set it in the *strongest*  
 Point of Light.

I WOULD not leave any Thing un-  
 touched, that may supply Us with Mate-  
 rials, by which to judge concerning the  
 Sense of this Place. And, therefore, I  
 would observe, That as in Scripture-Style,  
 by a well known *Figure* of Speech, A  
*Sacrifice*



*Natural Religion, &c.*

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VI.

*Sacrifice for Guilt* is called *Guilt*, and the *Effects*, or *Punishment of Sin*, go under the Name of *Sin* ; so (by the like Liberty of Speech) those Animal Emotions, which give *Occasion* to Sin, may possibly be called by the same Name.

THAT Antient Commentator, which I cited in My *Last*, expounds the Text in One or Both of these Senses : ‘ Not, says He, that the Operation of Sin is *Natural* ; for then We should be clear of Punishment. But Nature leans or inclines to offend, when disturbed by Passion ; but Judgment and Reason gain the Victory with Care and Application.’ He adds, that, ‘ Had not our first Parents sinned, They would not have incurred the Mulct or Penalty of Death ; and a Freedom from Passions (meaning those which grew out of the Mortal State) had accompanied a Freedom from Mortality. But since they sinned, and by one Sin became Mortal, They begat Such,’ *i. e.* Children subject (like Them) to Death. And to Beings, so circumstanced, are certain Passions incident ; with these Passions the Principle of Reason has a Strife ; if

SERM. it overcome, there is a Reward ; if it is  
VI. foiled, there is a *Desert* of Punishment.

But after all, How just soever this Sentiment of St. *Chrysostom's* may be in itself, and far preferable to What has for some Ages since prevailed in the Christian World, it labours under much the same Objection with the Other, though not in the same Degree. For, if *David* proposed to exaggerate His Offence, He would not have sent Us to the common Frailty ; and Mortality, with those Temptations to which the Latter has laid Us open. Because, by so doing, He would have excused His Own ill Conduct, in that very Place where He attempts to set it in the *strongest* Point of Light.

I AM not insensible, that We ought not to offer *Violence* to Revelation, no, not in its own Defence ; and, therefore, to obviate all Suspicion of that Kind, I will wind up the Argument with the following Query :

WHETHER it be not a *Breach* of Justice with Regard to any Writer (whether Sacred or Profane) should We fasten some *crude* Construction upon Him, when there  
[appears

appears to be no Necessity for it, either in the Words themselves, or in the Occasion upon which They were used? Or take it thus: Whether, in order to do Justice to all Writers, the Kind and Genius of the Language in which they wrote should not be considered, in Conjunction with the *particular* Drift and Sense of the Place to be explained? And, if so, since it is well known, that the *Oriental* Languages abound in the boldest Figures and Modes of Speech, and since it appears from Antiquity and from the Practice of the Antient *Jews*, that These *very* Forms of *being born in Sin*, and being called *Transgressors from the Womb*, add, if You will (with the Son of *Sirach*) that Their *Production itself was Evil*, and Their *Wickedness implanted in Them*, were not applied by Them to Mankind in Common, but only to particular Cases, and when expressive of the *utmost* Degree of Depravity and Guilt, Whether these Reasons will not justify Us in affixing some such Sense to the Place before Us? Thus have I shewn, by Way of Specimen, How dangerous a Thing it is to build Articles

SERM.  
VI.



SERM. of Faith upon the supposed *Necessity* of  
 VI. One Sense of Scripture, when some Other  
 Sense or Senses may be assigned, more consonant to the Scriptures and to the Truth and Reason of Things.

THOUGH, if not, and were any One at a Loss, about the true Sense of some disputable Place, this is no solid Reason, Why He should take up with a wrong One. He had much better *modestly* confess His Ignorance, than do Dishonour to Revelation by fathering His Own Mistake upon it; and, by so doing, overthrow that Sacred *Harmony* which must be found between Natural Religion and Revealed. Whoever proceeds upon this Principle would do well to consider, Upon how unsafe and treacherous a Ground He stands.

HIS Method of Reasoning is as *weak*, as it is unjust. Because, how certain soever He may be of the Truth of Revelation, He cannot possibly be *so* certain that He does not mistake its Meaning, whenever He affixes some unreasonable Sense to it, as He may be certain, if He will examine the *Nature* of Things, That His Proposition contains an Untruth. I am  
 not

not willing to dismiss this Subject without making some *Practical* Reflexion upon it; and Here, therefore, I would observe, Though We should ever cultivate a humble Sense of Our Own Demerits, and though We should confess Our Sins in the true Spirit of Repentance towards God, yet We should guard against that misguided Zeal which over-acts its Part. If Religion requires at Our Hands a *reasonable* Service, it cannot be expected that We should accuse and condemn Ourselves for That which was not in Our Power to avoid, much less that, through the Sides of Nature, We should traduce the Author of Nature. How much wiser will it be to treat the *Divine* Workmanship with Reverence? Instead of depreciating the Gifts of God, We should acknowledge Them to the Full.

We should do so, were it only in *Gratitude* to Him, How much more, if We are supplied from Hence with the fairest Motives and Encouragement to Obedience. It might possibly have been some Excuse for Sin, had We brought into the World a Nature *congenial* to it.

SERM. BUT if the Human Nature appears, by  
 VI. its very Frame and Constitution, to have  
 been formed for Truth, Sanctity, and Vir-  
 tue, it is impossible to avoid this Infe-  
 rence, That these Things should be made  
 the Subject of Our Pursuit.

OTHERWISE, the Gifts of God will not  
 be applied to Their proper Use; and those  
 excellent Faculties lie dormant upon Our  
 Hands, which, if improved aright, would  
 render Us capable of Divine *Imitation*,  
 and Divine *Communion*.

SERM.



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## S E R M O N VII.

The Virtuous Practice alike inculcated under *All* Religion, whether Natural or Revealed.

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I T I M. vi. II.

--- *Follow after Righteousness.*

**T**HERE is no Philosophy of equal Importance to That which relates to *Practice*; which teaches SERM.  
VII.  
Us to form a just Estimate of Things, and, instead of suffering the Whole of Our Thoughts and Time to be engrossed by worldly Pursuits, points out a more noble Scene of Action; no less than Our Improvement in those *Moral* Perfections, on which the Dignity and Happiness of Our Nature depend.

SUCH (if I apprehend the Apostle aright) is the Light in which We ought to consider

SERM. consider the Exhortation of the Text. St. VII. *Paul*, in this Paragraph, sets before Us a *beauteous Contrast* of Characters. To the Love of Gold, He opposes the Love of Virtue, and in the Room of those criminal Pursuits, which bespeak a Soul too intemperately attached to the present World, He substitutes Another, that is more consonant to the *Christian Character*, and becoming the *Man of God*.

THE first of these Characters is described in the 9th and 10th Verses: *They, who will be rich, fall into a Temptation and Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction—for the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil, which, whilst some have coveted after, They have erred from the Faith, and pierced Themselves through with many Sorrows*; Here is that vicious Character, which the true Wisdom or Philosophy condemns; not surely an honest Industry, and just Attention to Our secular Callings. Not, surely, the Providing both for Our-selves and that Part of Mankind, which is dependent on Us; for St. *Paul expressly inculcates this Duty in His Writings*. But that

that restless and inordinate Desire of SERM.  
 Riches, by which Men contract many an VII.  
 ill Habit, and *distempered* Cast of Mind;  
 such as absolutely indisposes Them for the  
 Love of Truth and Virtue, if not betray-  
 ing Them into criminal and dishonest Prac-  
 tices, in order to obtain Their End.

AND then, in *direct Opposition* to This,  
 He subjoins in the Text, *But Thou, O  
 Man of God, flee these Things, and follow  
 after Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love,  
 Patience, Meekness.*

ALL Things are best understood in  
 Connexion; and, therefore, How true so-  
 ever it is, that Righteousness and *Univer-  
 sal* Virtue are convertible Terms, One  
 would be inclined to think, that the Word  
 [*Righteousness*] in the present Situation, re-  
 quires a more *limited* Sense. Our Author  
 does not appear to intend by it the Moral  
 Character in General, but that *particular*  
 Branch of Morality, which We call by  
 the Name of *Justice*, or Equity between  
 Man and Man. My Reason for this Con-  
 struction is, partly, because it is opposed  
 to the exorbitant Love of Money, and  
 partly, because it is recommended in Con-  
 junction



SERM. junction with some other Virtues, and good  
 VII. Qualities, and consequently is considered,  
 not as the *Whole*, but as *One* Ingredient out  
 of Many, that go to constitute the Virtuous  
 and Religious Character.

BEFORE We enter on a more particular Examination of this Subject, it may not be amiss to observe in General, That, by *Righteousness*, or *Justice*, I understand, *That* Virtue, which consists in giving to every One His *Right* or Due. And, if this be its true Definition, the Virtue under Consideration will be found to be of a far *more extensive* Kind, than either the Administration of Justice in Our Courts of Judicature, or the Observance of Truth and Probity in our private Commerce. The true Righteousness is concerned with Right, in *every* Form. ‘ And, since an  
 ‘ Enemy has His Rights, as well as a  
 ‘ Friend, it follows, That the Obligati-  
 ‘ on of Justice takes Place, not only be-  
 ‘ tween the Members of the *same*, but  
 ‘ *different* Communities, as well in a State  
 ‘ of *War*, as in That of *Peace*. Because,  
 ‘ though in a State of War, there may be  
 ‘ a Forfeiture of *some* Rights, Yet not of  
 ‘ *All*;

' *All*; and, wherever the Idea of Right  
' or Due, takes Place, the Virtue of Jus-  
' tice is concerned.'

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AND now, the better to inculcate the present Virtue upon Our Minds, let Us, *in the first Place*, consider the Obligation to it, grounded in the Truth and Reason of Things; and, after having laid down this general Plan, illustrate the Subject, by a Variety of Particulars.

SOME Truths are so obvious to the Eye of Reason, that They are seen by Their Own Light, and without the Help of any intervening Argument, or Medium. I should have thought, that the Truth before Us might fairly have been reduced under this Class. For What Being, that is endued with Reason, can question, Whether it be fit and right to give to every One His Due? But We find, at Times, That the plainest Truths may be overlooked, through *Disuse* of Reason; That that crafty \* *African*, who is said to have called in Question the Obligation of a *Promise*, might as well have questioned the Obligation of *Justice* in General. Excuse

\* Muley Ismael.

Me,

SERM. Me, therefore, if I trespass, for a While,  
 VII. upon Your Time, by throwing in the following Remarks :

WHOEVER imagines, that He may make free with *Another's* Right or Due, would do well to ask Himself, Whether that Other, for the same Reason, might not as well make free with *His*? For, if not——And if He thinks, that *His Own* Right ought not to be invaded, I must ask again, What Reason can be assigned for *His Own* Particular, which may not, and with equal Justness, be applied to the Rights of Another? If He says, That it is not fit He should suffer without a *sufficient* Cause, He argues, indeed, from the justest Principles——But Principles of so extensive a Kind, as to include every Other Being in the Universe. An Obligation, placed in Something *peculiar* to Himself, proves only with Reference to *His Own Particular* ; but an Obligation, grounded in the Fitness and Reason of Things, extends alike to *All* Men ; nor can it be violated without sapping the Foundation, on which all Religion and Virtue stand. For Both must ultimately be



be resolved into this *first* Principle, That SERM.  
VII.  
it is incumbent on a reasonable Being to act according to the Fitness and Reason of Things. Or, should Our Objector (to avoid the Force of this Conclusion) have Recourse to another Argument, taken from the Principle of Self-Love, if He can be brought to reflect at all, He must see that this Argument will serve as well in *Another's* Case as in *His Own*; for no Man but wishes well to Himself, and consequently, if this Principle justifies the Resenting an Injury in One single Instance, it does the same in All. But, in Reality, it is not a mere Passion or Affection, but the Truth and Reason of Things, that is the *Rule* of Action, and every Man should have His Own Right and Due, not because He desires as much, but because to *deprive* Him of it would be a Contradiction to *That*, which is the *Rule* of Action, to all intelligent Beings, not the First and Greatest excepted, I mean, the Truth and Reason of Things.

WHOEVER invades, for Instance, Another's Property, does, in Effect, contradict One of these two Truths, either That there

SERM. is such a Thing as Property at all, or,

VII. *secondly*, that, What is *Another's* Property, should not be disposed of, as if it were *His Own*. By the same Rule, That We should not make free with *Another's Substance*, We should not injure His Reputation : This being a *Property* of a still *nobler* Kind, as One of Our Own Poets has well observed, in those excellent Lines of His, where, proposing to paint the Spirit of Detraction in its darkest Colours, He expresses Himself as follows :

‘ BUT He, that filches from Me My  
‘ good Name, *robs* Me of That, which  
‘ Nought enriches Him, and makes Me  
‘ Poor indeed.’

WE may carry the same Reasoning, from the Positive Invasion of *Another's* Right, into those Instances of Injustice, which consist in the bare *Neglect*, or Omission of Duty.

NOT to obey a just and legitimate Authority ; not to love Our Benefactor, considered as such ; not to vindicate an injured Reputation, or afford any other Kind of Succour, when having it in Our Power, and when a proper Subject is set before Us,

Us, are all so many Violations of *That* SERM.  
 Virtue which consists in giving to every VII.  
 One His proper Due. And, should this  
 Conduct be compared with the Truth and  
 Reason of Things, a Contrariety imme-  
 diately appears ; for it is either to deny,  
 That there are in Fact such Things, as  
 Authority, Reputation, Distress, &c. or,  
 if supposed, not to *treat* Them according  
 to What in Truth They are, but to in-  
 troduce that Worst of Absurdities, an Ab-  
 surdity that consists not in Theory but in  
 Practice, and confound, in Facts, the eter-  
 nal Difference of Things.

BUT to proceed——Every Promise  
 being from the Nature of the Thing Some-  
 thing that relates to Another's Good, it  
 transfers or makes over some *Right* to that  
 Other, and, consequently, the Party, to  
 whom the Promise is made, has a *Claim*  
 upon Us for the Performance of it. As,  
 therefore, the Virtue of Justice is concern-  
 ed in securing the *Rights* of Men, for  
 this Reason it is One Branch of Justice to  
 observe Our Promise. A Promise carries  
 this Obligation along with it, when confi-  
 dered by *itself* ; How much more, when  
 confirmed by Oath ?



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To illustrate This by One single Instance, How much soever the Fate of *Regulus* has been lamented, We find His Steadiness and Veracity as much applauded, who, when dismissed \* from *Carthage*, upon Oath, that, if He did not procure an Exchange of Prisoners, He would surrender Himself into the Hands of the Enemy; and, finding, upon His Arrival at *Rome*, the Proposal by no Means conducive to the Public Good, not only dissuaded the Senate from it, but chose, rather than forfeit His Engagement, to return into a State of Exile, and resign Himself to the Power and Fury of those *exasperated* Barbarians.

Is it possible for any History, whether Ancient or Modern, to produce a *fairer* Instance of the Sanctity of Oaths, and Obligation of Compacts? Or, Where shall We find a better Comment upon those Words of Scripture, *He sweareth to His Own Heart, and changeth not?*

It cannot be expected, that Men of Retirement should be able to assign every

\* Appian. *de Bello Punico*, p. 2, 3.

*under All Religion.*

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Violation of Right, which is capable of being committed in Common Life. SERM.  
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HERE every One should take Care to inform Himself, What is fair and equitable in His particular Sphere of Action; which, if done with Care, will afford Him a much better Rule of Conduct, than Any that We can suggest. But, if that Reflexion of St. *Paul's* holds good, That the Ambition of becoming *Rich* betrays Men *into many foolish and hurtful Lusts*, I know, in General, of no better Security against the Spirit of Injustice, than to guard against That of Luxury and Avarice: Give Me a Man, whose Heart is not captivated by the Love of Gold, and who has well digested that wholesome Maxim, That a *Man's Life consists not in the Abundance of Things possessed*, and We have here a Person, who, of All Men, is least in Danger of practising upon Another's Weakness and Credulity on the One Hand, or with the Purchaser in the *Proverbs* to run down the Commodity, and cry, '*It is Naught, it is Naught, and, after He is gone His Way, to boast of so ungenerous an Advantage.*'

SERM. A GOOD Conscience is, in Reality, a  
 VII. richer Treasure, than both the *Indies*.  
 And, would We see, How great a Stress  
 the Spirit of Religion lays upon it, We  
 need only examine that Profession, which  
 the *Convert-Publican* made to Our Lord,  
*Behold, Lord, the Half of My Goods I*  
*give unto the Poor, and, if I have taken*  
*away any Thing from any Man by false Ac-*  
*cusation, I restore Him Fourfold.* ‘Hap-  
 ‘py Man! who had learnt from the *Son*  
 ‘of God so much Virtue, in so short a  
 ‘Time! and, by making so ample a Re-  
 ‘paration of His past Misconduct, has  
 ‘done more than vindicate His Own par-  
 ‘ticular Character. By this Profession  
 ‘He sets Our Common Christianity in the  
 ‘fairest Point of Light, and leaves Us to  
 ‘infer, That this Holy Religion is abso-  
 ‘lutely inconsistent with every fraudulent  
 ‘and unrighteous Practice, and (like its  
 ‘gracious Author) breathes the Spirit of  
 ‘Love and Good-will to Mankind.’

*In the last Place, If Justice consists in*  
 giving to every One His Due, this single  
 Principle may be carried into every Rela-  
 tion of Life, whether of the Natural, Ci-  
 vil,



vil, or Ecclesiastic Kind. All have Their SERM.  
respective Demands upon Us, and All their VII.  
respective Rights grounded in the Nature  
and Reason of Things, which is only another Word for the Will of God.

ALL Power, whether it be from Nature, or mutual Compact, should be employed for the Good of Those, who are subjected to it; and, consequently, from the Time, that a Prince, Magistrate, or Representative, or any other Person, in whom any Power or Trust is lodged, neglects to apply that Power to so just an Use, He violates the Rule of Right; He becomes *false* to that Trust, or Charge, which is devolved upon Him. In Matters where *Religion and Conscience* are concerned, We know of no Human Power and Authority at all; for We are taught to *call no Man Master upon Earth*. But still, from the Nature of the Thing, Whoever undertakes the Office of a Public Teacher, should regard Himself as acting in Trust, and should endeavour to discharge the same with all Fidelity and Care. This single Circumstance, by the Way, shews, How mischievous a Tendency that Custom has, which is so prevalent amongst

SERM. Your *weaker* Kind of Professors, I mean

VII. That of retrenching the *Liberty* of the Pulpit—since, by so doing, They not only *defraud Themselves* of that Light and Knowledge which We might otherwise communicate to Them; but, which is the *greater* Evil of the Two, They bring Our *Integrity* into Danger, by tempting Us to sacrifice Our Duty to Our Interest, and lurch the Truths of God, in order to escape the Censure and Ill-will of Men.

WOULD the Time admit, I might carry the same Reflexions into other Articles of Duty; I might shew from the *Nature* of the Thing itself, That no One should carry it with a haughty or supercilious Air towards His Inferiors, much less to His Equals, but, regarding Ourselves as Children of One Common Parent, We should consult the Peace and Welfare of the *Universal* Family.

WE should remember with *Plato*,  
 ‘ That None of Us is born only for Him-  
 ‘ self,—That Our Country has *One* De-  
 ‘ mand upon Us, Our Parents Another,  
 ‘ Our

‘ Our Friends a Third ;’ and though the SERM.  
VII.  
Brute Part of the Creation are subjected to Our Use, not to our *Tyranny* ; and, consequently, That there is a Justice to be practised towards Them, or, to express it in the Scripture-Style, *That a righteous Man regardeth the Life of His Beast.*

THUS have I considered Our Obligation to the present Virtue, and, by Way of *Specimen*, illustrated the same by several Particulars. And now, setting the Rule of *Right* before Us, let Us (in the Fear of God ) apply Ourselves to the most constant and uniform Observance of it. Let Us with Care consider every Sphere and Relation in which We are placed, and most *religiously* observe the Duties resulting from Them.

By this firm and stedfast Adherence to the Rule of Rectitude, We shall not only act, with Applause, the Part allotted Us in the *present* State, but be the better qualified for that more perfect Community, where Nothing, *that defiles*, can enter ; We *Christians* being taught to ex-



SERM. pect the Time, when the present System  
 VII. of Things shall be *dissolved*, and, in its  
 Room, shall succeed *the New Heavens,*  
*and New Earth, in which dwelleth Righte-*  
*ousness.*

NOW to Him, that is able to preserve  
 You from falling, and present You faultless,  
 before His Throne, with exceeding Joy, to  
 God only wise, be Glory for Ever and Ever,  
 Amen.

S E R M,

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## S E R M O N VIII.

. A Preliminary Discourse to the  
Defence of Revelation.

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A C T S ii. 36.

*Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God has made That same Jesus, whom Ye Have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

**T**HERE is no Rule of greater SERM.  
Service in Our Enquiries after VIII.  
Truth, than This, That, how ~  
just soever Our first Axioms, or Principles, may be, We should take Care, that  
We do not draw wrong Conclusions from  
Them.

W H E N

SERM.

VIII.

WHEN *Justin Martyr* had the Question put to Him, by *Trypho* the Jew, Whether a Man, conforming to the Institutions of *Moses*, could be saved? He replied to this Effect, That though, in His Judgment, those Institutions were Things accommodated to the peculiar State and Circumstances of that particular People, yet, as the Religion of *Moses* contained in it those Moral Duties, which are founded in the *Nature* of Things, and consequently of *eternal* Obligation, Whoever lived up to this Religion, should arrive at Happiness, and meet Hereafter, in the same blessed State, with those just Men, that lived before the *Mosaic* Dispensation, and with Those, who, in the then present Age, were acquainted with the *Christ of God*. I mention this Piece of History, in Justice to some Modern Opposers of *Christianity*, who set out upon the same good Principle with this Ancient Writer, who first defended *Christianity* with His Pen, and afterwards as nobly sealed it with His Blood. Like Him They discover in Their Writings a just Sense of Deity, and suppose that the Com-

mon



mon Parent has taken Care of All His Off-  
spring ; like Him they place the Cause of  
Virtue on its proper Ground or Basis, the  
Truth and Nature of Things, and as just-  
ly observe, That this Law is common to  
All intelligent Beings, eternally and inva-  
riably the same.

SERM.  
VIII.

It may possibly appear strange, That  
Men, setting out with the same good  
Principles, and who start, if I may so  
say, from one common Bar, should take  
such widely different Roads : The One  
not scrupling to admit a whole System  
of Positive Institutions into the *Jewish*  
Worship, under the Notion of their being  
relatively fit, and well calculated for the  
Good of that particular People : The  
Other absolutely rejecting every Thing of  
this Kind, and judging it to be an Infringe-  
ment of the Eternal Original Law, if any  
Command, or Duty, take Place under Re-  
velation, that was not alike incumbent up-  
on Us before.

It must be confessed, That in Matters,  
where Truth is concerned, Nothing should  
determine the Judgment, besides that  
Proof or Force of Evidence, with which  
it

SERM. it is accompanied. But still the *Importance*  
 VIII. of any Controversy should be suggested,  
 were it only to engage Our Attention to it; and therefore I must observe, That since it appears both from the Text, and from many Other Parts of Scripture, That there are *New Duties* enjoined by the *Christian* Revelation, it follows, That, if this first Principle of the *Theists* is just and true, the *Christian* Revelation must be false. *All Power*, says Our Lord, *is given to Me in Heaven and Earth.* And We have the same Truth in the Text, delivered by One of His Disciples, with that noble Frankness of Speech, which the Spirit of Integrity inspires: *Let all the House of Israel know, that This Jesus, whom Ye have crucified, has God made both Lord and Christ.* Not that the Scripture, by this Delegation of Power, intends a mere Act of Sovereignty, or arbitrary Will; but the Effect of a certain wise and good Design, formed in the Breast of God, partly in Reward of our Saviour's Virtue, and partly for the Good of this lower System.

As therefore We have a *New Relation* Here revealed, and such as the Light of Nature

Nature could never have discovered, and as *New Duties* must, of Course, arise from Hence, I shall endeavour to shew the Consistency of This with Natural Religion; in other Words, That, should a Revelation enjoin some *New Duties*, by so doing it advances Nothing inconsistent with the absolute Perfection, Extent, and Invariableness of *That Law*, which is common to All intelligent Natures. And here I must beg Leave to resume a Remark, advanced in the Beginning of the Discourse, That there is no Rule of greater Service in Our Enquiries after Truth, than This, That, how just soever Our Foundation-Maxims or Axioms are, We should take Heed, that We do not draw *wrong* Conclusions from Them. Accordingly, whilst We concede to the Modern *Theist* (What He professes to have) a generous and well meaning Zeal for that Original and Absolutely-perfect Law, it behoves Him, on the Other Hand, to take Care What Kind of Inference He raises from it; and my Reason for this Caution is as follows: Because, if He takes in the *full* Force and Extent of that *very* Law, for which

He



SERM. He pleads, and considers How it reaches  
VIII. to all possible States, Circumstances, or  
Relations in which a Moral Agent may  
be placed, He must either have some better  
Objection than *This* against Christianity, or acknowledge it to be Something  
that is not to be opposed.

IN Support of This, I desire no other  
Concession, than that *very* Principle or  
Axiom, on which the *Theist* builds; I  
mean, That the Law of Nature is absolutely *perfect*, eternally and invariably  
the *same*; for if so; for that very Reason, because this Law is absolutely perfect  
and invariably the same, it will follow, That new Duties will of Necessity  
grow out of new Relations, and that a  
Moral Agent ought in Reason to act in  
Conformity to Them. Otherwise He offends  
against that absolutely-perfect and  
most extensive Law, for which He pleads;  
a Law which obliges a Moral Agent to act  
in Conformity to the Truth and Nature of  
Things, in *whatever Relation* He is supposed  
to be placed.

I SEE no Possibility of evading the Force  
of this Argument, but by denying That  
God

God can constitute a new Relation. But SERM.  
this, *as yet*, I think has not been denied. VIII.

On the Contrary it is allowed by the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, that ' When Men do not pay a due Regard to the most perfect Religion of Nature, but mix it with Human Inventions, it *may* then be agreeable to Divine Goodness to *send* Persons to recall them to a more strict Observance of it.' A Person who is *sent of God* constitutes a *New* Relation, not That of an ordinary Teacher, But of a Teacher with this *additional* Circumstance, That He is *sent of God*, and where, for that very Reason, the Persons, to whom He is sent, are obliged to give so much the greater Attention to Him. But now—If God can constitute *One* new Relation, where some good End is to be answered by it, for the same Reason, He can constitute *Another*. And therefore, since it must not be dissolved, that Our Religion directs Us to form a much higher Conception of *Christ*, than that of a common Prophet, this higher Character must be considered.

THE Voice of Reason informs Us,  
That no Bounds can be set to Almighty  
Power.

SERM. Power. And tho' the Father of the Universe cannot deny Himself, nor cease to be, what in Truth He is, the supreme Lord and Governor of All Things, or, as the Ancients styled Him, *the God of the Whole*, meaning of All without Exception; yet He can constitute Another *both Lord and Christ, Lord of All, Himself only excepted that did put all Things under Him*. If therefore such a Relation is possible, as possible are the Duties that grow out of it; and, should such a Relation *in Fact* take Place, no sooner is it known, but the Obligation begins; an Obligation grounded in that absolutely-perfect and invariable Law, that obliges Us, in whatever Relation We are placed, to observe those Moral Fitneses or Duties, that belong to it, *i. e.* in the present Case, to acknowledge God to be, What in Truth He is, the Fountain of Honour; and the Son of God to be, What in Truth He is, a Person invested with this Honour by Him.

BUT, because much Stress is laid on this Head, I will beg Leave to insist more at large upon it; and this the rather, lest any One should be carried away with the mere Sound of Words, and take up with the  
the



the Appearance of an Argument, instead of the Reality. SERM. VIII.

I NEED not tell You, How great a Resemblance there is between the Nature of God, and That of Truth. One common Characteristic belongs to Both ; Both are eternally and invariably the Same. And tho' God's *Moral* Attributes must not be resolved into the same Kind of Necessity, with *That* by which He exists, yet, even Here, it behoves Us to conceive of God, as unchangeably good and just, in that Sense of the Word, which is consistent with His Moral Agency and Freedom. Should it be enquired, Of what Service this Reflexion is to the Point in Hand ? I answer, It has a double Use, *first*, to assist our Conception, How the Moral Law is still the *Same*, tho' the Duties, resulting from different Relations, be supposed to differ ; and, *2dly*, to shew, How God also may be still the Same, and not chargeable with Inconstancy, whether He think fit to constitute new Relations, or, when those Relations are known, insists on Our Observing the Duties that grow out of Them.

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L

I SAY

SERM. I SAY then, As God Himself for  
VIII. that very Reason, because He is unchange-  
ably the Same, and invariably consults  
the Fitness and Reason of Things, will  
constitute new Relations, whenever there  
is a sufficient Reason for Them, nor  
can He be justly charged with Inconstancy  
upon that Account : So, these new Rela-  
tions being supposed, that Original Law,  
which obliges all Intelligent Agents to act  
agreeably to the Truth and Nature of  
Things, obliges Us to act in Conformity  
to these Relations, *i. e.* in other Words,  
to observe the Duties that grow out of  
Them. If there should be any of My  
Hearers not able to keep Pace with so  
abstract a Reasoning, They may take it  
under a more easy and familiar Form, by  
putting this Question to Themselves, Whe-  
ther, if, in Human Governments, One  
*general* Law being presupposed, I mean,  
That the Public Good shall be at *All*  
*Times* consulted, Whether, I say, that  
Law, or He that governs by it, ceases to be  
the Same, by creating new Offices, and  
issuing out new Commissions, when by  
the Public Good required? In such a  
Change

Change as *This*, I read the Unchangeable; SERM.  
and the Unity of Character is *then* best pre- VIII.  
served, when, by Our Objector's Reason-  
ing, it should seem to be most invaded.

IF the Charge of Inconstancy take Place at all, it must be on the *contrary* Supposition. Let some strange and preternatural Ferments be supposed to rise in the Body Politic, or in That *properly* so called, and a wise Governor, or Physician, if the Case required some *New* Treatment, would be then most inconsistent with Himself, when keeping too rigidly to the *Old*.

BUT I am not insensible, There is a Danger from Similes, for it is seldom They agree with the Subject to be illustrated in all Respects; and, therefore, I will dismiss the Figure, and resume the Argument, as follows:

WHO does not see, How, under Natural Religion itself, as Our Relations increase, Our Stock of Duties increases with Them. But now, if *this Change* of Duty is not judged inconsistent with the immutable Nature of God and Truth in the *One* Case, By what Rule of Equity, is it charged with Inconsistency in the *Other*?



SERM. Does not the *Truth* still continue to oblige,  
 VIII. how different soever the Forms, in which  
 it appears? Or, Does not the Authority  
 of God still take Place, how great soever  
 the *Variety* of Acts, in which He thinks  
 fit to exercise the Principle of Obedi-  
 ence?

IF this Objection be of any Force a-  
 gainst *Christianity*, let Us push it some-  
 what *further*, and give up One of the most  
 noble Ingredients in the Reward of Vir-  
 tue, since there is no Room to expect  
 Our *Powers* should be enlarged, if Our *Du-*  
*ties* cannot; no Room to approve the Just-  
 ness of that Reflexion (which yet carries its  
 own Evidence with it) *Well done, Thou*  
*good and faithful Servant, Thou hast been*  
*faithful in a few Things, I will make Thee*  
*Ruler over Many.*

BUT so much may suffice by Way of  
 Reply to This. If there be any Objection  
 against God's making Use of subordinate  
 Agents, I would observe as follows, That  
 great Modesty (it must be owned) becomes  
 Us, when treating of so sublime a Subject  
 as the Divine Counsels, and Dispensati-  
 ons, but still, in some Cases, Their Wis-  
 dom

dorn is *so* apparent, that He who runs may read. SERM. VIII.

WHAT Man, for Instance, that is Sick, would imagine He has any Ground for Complaint, That God should restore Him to Health, by that Virtue, which He has infused into the Plant, or that Skill, which He gives the Physician to apply it right? What, tho' the Author of Nature had it in His Power to effect a Cure in some *Other* Way, when possibly, in that *Other* Way, some valuable Ends had been precluded, which are obtained by *This*. We discern Something of a Fitness and Beauty growing out of this Dependence, and Connexion of Interests amongst Ourselves. It has good Effects in Our *Lower* System; and should the whole Universe be considered as *One Larger* System, What forbids, but the same Observation may hold good There? Why may not Beings of superior Orders be variously exercised and employed in those God-like Acts of Goodness and Benevolence to Other Beings? Why may not the Angels, like so many *Ministering Spirits*, be *sent forth*, as the Scripture represents

SERM. Them, to minister to Heirs of Salvation?

VIII. Or, May may not He, to whom all the Angels of God are subjected, issue out His Commands and Orders to Them, whilst the Supreme Father, and Superintendant of the Whole, looks down with Approbation, and sees, in one single unbroken View, so many different Parts acted well, and worthy of Applause; observes all these just and regular Movements, these close Connexions and Subordinations, and surveys, with Complacency, that *summary* Beauty, which results from the Whole; the Whole being the Effect of His Own all-wise, and good, and just Contrivance and Design?

‘ No sooner (says the Noble Author  
 ‘ of the *Characteristics*) does the Eye open  
 ‘ to Figures, the Ear to Sounds, than  
 ‘ straight the Beautiful results, and Grace  
 ‘ and Harmony are known.’ And May  
 We not as justly observe the Same, from  
 the Time that Revelation undrew the  
 Veil of the Intellectual World, and made  
 us see, How much is There contriving and  
 transacting for Our Good?

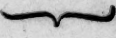
AND



AND if such Relations as these are once SERM.  
*made known*, Why should We take the VIII.  
 Advantage of those strong Impressions,  
 that are made upon Us, by sensible and so-  
 cial Objects, to divert Our Regards from  
*These*? We are born, it is true, for the  
 Practice of Truth and Virtue; but Why  
 must that Truth or Virtue be confined  
*amongst Ourselves*? Or, What forbids our  
 Acting as truly just and virtuous a Part to-  
 wards Beings of a *Higher Order*? And Be-  
 having aright, not only to the Supreme  
 Father Himself, but also to Whatever  
 Other Beings He thinks fit to employ,  
 like so many Hands or Instruments of His,  
 in distributing *His* Gifts and Blessings a-  
 mongst Us?

UPON the Whole----Has any One an  
 honest Concern for the Law of Nature,  
 or that Invisible Power, by which it is  
 supported, He need not be in Pain for Ei-  
 ther. There is Nothing Here, that affects  
 that Steadiness or Constancy, which be-  
 longs to Both. Let God and His Law be  
 never so invariable,----so much the better  
 for the *Christian* Cause; for it is built on  
 this very Principle, That, new Relations

SERM. being made known, both *God* and His  
 VIII. *Law* are so firm and steddy, as to insist  
 upon Our acting in Conformity to Them;  
 And that very Reflexion, which *St. Paul*  
 made on Another Occasion, may with  
 equal Justness be *applied* to This, ~~Do~~ *We*  
 (*We Christians*) *overthrow the Law?*  
*Nay---but We establish the Law.* I have  
 Here proved as much, with Regard to  
 Our Foundation-Principle, and I trust  
 (if a due Regard be had to the Scripture-  
 Doctrine) no Superstructure will be rais-  
 ed upon it, but which is of the same  
 Kind. A *Moral* Grace and Beauty will  
 be found in every Part of the *Christian*  
 System, and the Whole conspire to pro-  
 mote that *good* Design, which may with  
 Reason be expected from every Revela-  
 tion that comes from God;----I mean  
 the Promoting the Spirit of Piety toward  
 God, and Good-will to Men. Thus the  
 Religion of Nature still lives and flou-  
 rishes under Revealed, without any De-  
 rogation from its Sanctity, or any Infringe-  
 ment upon its proper Force and Validity.  
 The same just Sense of Deity is common  
 to Both, and this Principle (if We un-  
 derstood

derstood its full Force and Extent) will SERM.  
lead Us to obey the Will of God, not VIII.  
only in that Set of Duties, which *already*   
subsist amongst Us, but also, in What-  
ever *New Duties* may arise, from some  
*New Relations* in which the Supreme Dis-  
poser may think fit to place Us.

*To Whom be Glory, &c.*

S E R M.



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## S E R M O N IX.

A General Defence of Revelation.

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ACTS XV. 18.

*Known unto God are all his Works  
from the Beginning of the World.*

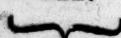
SERM.  
IX.

**H**OW compleat soever the *Christian* Dispensation may appear, when examined by itself, There is another and more extensive Point in View, in which it may be considered, I mean, as it is One Dispensation out of Many, advanced by the good Providence of God, for the Instruction and Reformation of Mankind. The Author to the *Hebrews*, if I apprehend Him aright, suggests as much in that judicious Remark with which He opens His Epistle : *God, who at sundry Times, and in diverse Manners, spake, in Times past, to the Fathers*  
by

*by the Prophets, has in these last Days spoken to Us by His Son. And St. James to the same Effect in the Text, Simeon has declared, How God, at the first, did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a People for His Name; and to This agree the Words of the Prophets, as it is written, After This I will return, and will build again the Tabernacle of David, which is fallen down ---- that the Residue of Men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My Name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these Things; Known unto God are all His Works from the Beginning of the World.*

THE Steps, or Measures advanced in Support of Truth and Virtue, at different Times, may differ; but one and the same God is represented as the sole Author and Contriver of Them All; for *He, that spake to the Fathers by the Prophets, has in these last Days spoken to Us by His Son.* And, considering his Reach of Thought, and with how consummate a Forecast, and Wisdom, that All-perfect Being can form His Plans, it is no unreasonable Construction, which Our Apostle puts upon the Whole,

SERM. Whole, *Known unto God from the Beginning of the World are all His Works.*

IX.  What appears new or strange to Us, was long before known to Him ; and, how remote soever these Divine Interposures may be from each Other, They are all so many *Parts* of that precontrived Scheme, or Counfel, that had lain for Ages in the Breast of God.

SUCH is that *Relative* Point of View, in which We are taught to consider the *Christian* Dispensation, not as the *Only* Mean, or Method of Instruction, but as One Dispensation out of *Many*, and All, as so many Links in that Golden Chain, which appears to the All-perfect Mind in one compleat and united View. And surely, if there be any Proposition consistent with the Idea of a God, and worthy of that Relation, which He bears to Us, as Supreme Lord and Governor of the World, it must be This, in which He is represented, not only as providing for the Good and Virtuous Practice by the Light of Nature, but also, as having so formed and digested Things in His *Course of Providence*, as should best support and assist the



the Growth of that sacred and important Cause. SERM.  
IX.

ON the Other Hand it should not be diffembled, That there is scarce any Truth, but has its Difficulties belonging to it; and, since it becomes an impartial Enquirer to give Them the fairest Examination, I will lay out the first Part of this Discourse in considering some Objections against the Doctrine of the Text, and then conclude with some useful Reflexions upon the Whole.

To begin with the Objections against the Doctrine of the Text.

ONE Source of the Mistakes committed on all Sides (as well within as without the Pale of the *Christian* Profession) appears to Me, to consist in too *partial* and contracted a View of Things; it is no Wonder, if We reason ill upon any Subject, that We examine in *One* single Light, but which ought, from the Nature of the Thing, to have been considered in *Two* or *More*. And if so, it must be of great Importance in Our Enquiries after Truth to enlarge Our Views; We should take, as it were, *Our Stand* from a *rising Ground*,

SERM. *Ground*, and, instead of surveying the  
 IX. *Land-skip* by Halves, attend with Care  
 to all that Variety of Objects, which the  
 Nature of the Subject sets before Us.

To apply this Remark to the Case before Us.

IT is a great and most Catholic Truth that is suggested by St. *Paul*, in His Defence of Revelation, That God *left not Himself without a Witness* at any Time. And, indeed, if Mankind in *Common* are the Off-spring of God, it may with Reason be inferred, That the *Common Parent* has *sufficiently* provided for the Good and Welfare of Us All. But, as just a Maxim as This is, it is not impossible, but Some may draw a quite different Conclusion from it, than What the Apostle intended; for it may be said, *in the first Place*, That, if God has made a *sufficient* Provision for Mankind by the Light of Nature, What Ground, or Reason, could He have for Sending a Revelation? Or, *secondly*, if He thinks fit to throw in this *Additional* Help in One Age or Country, Why not, for the same Reason, in *All*? *Thirdly*, That General Laws are  
 Things

Things of too much Consequence to be SERM.  
suspended or over-ruled. And least of IX.

- all can This be expected, *in the fourth Place*, from that Being, whose Nature is immutable, and who is as much to be revered for the Steadiness, as for the Sanctity of his Counsels and Proceedings. Now, as Each of these Objections appear to Me founded in too partial and contracted a View of Things, I will endeavour, under Each, to point out those particular Truths, which are overlooked, and which, if taken into the Account, will furnish a sufficient Answer to Them.

*In the first Place*, It may be objected, That, if God has made *sufficient* Provision by the Light of Nature, What Ground, or Reason, can He have for Sending a Revelation?

I WOULD not willingly commit that Mistake of considering the Subject in too *partial* a Light, and therefore, instead of confining Ourselves to such Reflexions, as are suited only to *particular* Periods and Dispensations, I must propose it to be enquired, *in the first Place*, Whether, should it be supposed that God, *from the Beginning*,



SERM. *ning*, has thought fit to favour Mankind  
 IX. with some additional Helps, beside the  
 bare Light of Nature, *any Contradiction*  
 would follow from it, whether We re-  
 gard these Helps, as calculated to prevent  
 the Commission of Sin, or, when com-  
 mitted, to bring Us to reform?

It should be remembered, That We  
 are not Here considering that Part of the  
 Controversy, which relates to the *Historic*  
*Evidence*, or Proof in Fact, but only en-  
 quiring, Whether, *supposing* the Fact for  
 true, *any Contradiction* would follow from it?  
 And, by the Way, I must desire My  
 Reader to take this Hint along with Him,  
 through many of the ensuing Discourses  
 (if He shall think Them worthy of His  
 Perusal) the Design of which is not to  
 clear up the Historic Proof of the Fact,  
 but only to consider that *Previous* *Questi-*  
*on*, Whether, *supposing* the Fact for  
 True, any Contradiction would follow  
 from it? For, if it would,---the Contro-  
 versy is at an End; but, if not, the His-  
 toric Account may, for any Thing in Rea-  
 son to the Contrary, be true, and deserve

to

to be well weighed and examined by SERM.  
Us. IX.

I MUST therefore again put the Question, Whether, should it be supposed that God *from the Beginning* has thought fit to favour Mankind, with some additional Helps, *any Contradiction* would follow from it? For, till Something of this Kind is made to appear, I should think, no wise and considerate Man would condemn so *good* a Design *in Theory*, though, as yet, He should not be convinced of its being true *in Fact*.—And much less have We Ground to object against these superadded Helps, from the Time that Sin got Footing amongst Us.

SHALL Reproof, or Admonition, cease to be of Use, because the Light of Nature (if duly attended to) *might* have done without Them? When All Men know, That the Power of Reason is One Thing, and to draw that Power into Exercise is Another. What, though We had Room to hope, that Our Repentance would not be in vain, considering, What Kind of Being He is, to whom it is addressed, Has any Friend of Virtue and Religion Reason to com-  
Vol. I. M plain;

SERM. plain, if God, with a View to Our still

IX. *further* Encouragement has confirmed, by Revelation, those previous Conceptions, which We might have formed of His Grace and Clemency by the Light of Nature? Is it Nothing to have an *Actual Promise* from the *God of Truth*, and where, by necessary Consequence, the Ideas of Justice and Veracity must be superadded to That of Goodness? For a *Promise*, from the Nature of the Thing, transfers over a Right to the Parties concerned; and, though We cannot always determine, What Kind of Action the Laws of *Wisdom*, or even *Goodness*, require, This We may with the greatest Confidence affirm, That the All-righteous Being will never *recede* from His *Word*.

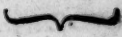
AND, as to *Christianity* in Particular, it should be enquired, Whether this sufficient Provision, I mean from the Light of Nature, did, *in Fact*, succeed at the Time in which this Revelation took Place; for if not; and, if the ordinary Means of Instruction, did not, *in Fact*, obtain the End, it might be an Act of Goodness in God to throw in More?

WHE-



WHETHER it was consistent with His SERM.  
*Wisdom*, to do as much, is a Query, which, IX.  
 I am inclined to think, it becomes Us to  
 leave with God Himself to determine;  
 at least, no Man can with Reason affirm,  
 It was not, before He is able to support  
 His Assertion, and shew Us, *Wherein* it  
 was a Breach of *Wisdom*, for the Father of  
 Our Spirits, to set on Foot some new  
 Mean of reclaiming Mankind, after they  
 had in Fact miscarried under the Old. He  
 must either *prove*, That Mankind were so  
 corrupt, that the Governor of the World  
*ought in Reason* to have cut them off;  
 or, if at Liberty to shew Them Mercy,  
 That He could not exert His *Mercy* in  
 this particular Way, to *One Part* of the  
 intellectual System, without prejudicing by  
 the same Means *Another*; and consequent-  
 ly, That the Good proposed was ballan-  
 ced by an equal, or greater Ill; or, *Last-*  
*ly*, That the Means, already in Being,  
 would answer the End AS WELL, with-  
 out any further Assistance. But, till these  
 Points are proved, which, as yet, have  
 never been proved, the Original Argument  
 stands firm and good; May not I also

SERM. add, That, as it is founded on the At-  
 IX. tribute of Goodness, it is founded on  
 Something, which, One would think,  
 every Friend of Virtue, and Well-wisher  
 to Mankind, should most heartily espouse,  
 and not oppose? And, though I would be  
 ever backward in saying a severe Thing,  
 yet the Subject itself extorts from Me  
 this Remark, That (so far as *this* Part of  
 the Controversy is concerned) Our Objec-  
 tor, if a Friend to the Cause of Virtue  
 and Religion, does not appear to argue  
 consistently with Himself. For do but  
 consider, the true State of the Case was  
 This, That Idolatry, and, with Idolatry,  
 many an execrable Vice had got Footing  
 in the World. The Corruption, in one  
 Form or other, was almost general ; and  
 that *very* Religion of Nature, for which  
 Our Objector pleads, was almost intirely  
 banished from the Sons of Men. Such  
 was Our Condition at the Time, when  
*Christianity* appeared, and, by its Appear-  
 ance, has done more for the Revival of  
 true Piety and Religion, than all the re-  
 peated Efforts of the *Gentile* Philosophy  
 put together. But now, observe the dif-  
 ferent

ferent Spirit which breathes forth in this SERM.  
 Divine Dispensation, and That which op- IX.  
 poses it: The Father of the Universe,   
 out of His great Goodness, interposes for  
 Our Relief in the One; 'He should have  
 ' left Us to shift for Ourselves, says the  
 ' Other; for He had already done enough,  
 ' and it was Our own Fault, if what He  
 ' had done, did not obtain the End pro-  
 ' posed.' It is confessed to Our Shame,  
 —It was; but, notwithstanding this Con-  
 cession, Which of the Two Conducts, do  
 Ye think, is most agreeable to the Idea of  
 Goodness, or most worthy of the Com-  
 mon Parent, That, wherein He takes no  
 other Advantage of Our past Misconduct,  
 than to display His Own most adorable  
 Grace and Lenity in Our Recovery; or  
 That, which (to the no small Satisfaction  
 of the great Adversary of God and Man)  
 would have Him observe a Kind of Neu-  
 trality, and leave Us to disengage Ourselves  
 from Our present deplorable Estate, as  
 well as We can?

BUT still it will be objected, *in the se-  
 cond Place*, That, if a Revelation was so



SERM. beneficial, Why was it not communicated to *All*?

IX.

To Which I answer, *first*, That, supposing We are not able to assign a Reason for This, as We are not for some other Appearances, whether in the Natural or Moral World, Will it follow, That an Objection, grounded in Our *Ignorance*, is of any Weight? Or rather, considering the Imperfection of Human Knowledge, Would it not become Us to sit down contented with those clear and evident Proofs that We have of the Divine Goodness, though We are not able to account for *some* Things, but must leave Them to some future Time to explain?

WOULD Our Objector throw any Force into His Argument, He must not content Himself with *Asking*, What Reason either He or I can give for the present Constitution, but *actually prove*, that (supposing the Constitution for true) some *Contradiction* will follow from it. Let Him point out That Attribute of Deity, which is infringed or violated by it; for, till *This* is made to appear, One and the Same Answer will serve for All Objections of this Kind,

Kind, That, whilst a *sufficient* Provision SERM.  
is secured for Mankind in Common, We IX.  
have not more Room to complain of this  
Diversity of Helps, in the *Moral* World,  
than of the like Diversity of Powers in  
the *Natural*; Is it not the common Voice  
of All Religion, whether Natural or Re-  
vealed, That the Supreme Master deals  
out to every Man His Talent *according to*  
*His Ability*? He proportions the Work,  
or *Quota* of Service, to the Power, and  
consequently expects no more at the Hands  
of His Servants, than what He gave Them  
a *Capacity* to perform. And, whilst this  
Rule of Equity is inviolably observed, Does  
it not become every Mouth to be stopped?  
Who shall prescribe Laws to God, or say  
to the Supreme Wisdom, Why hast Thou  
made Me *thus*? If the Foot shall say, Be-  
cause I am not the Hand, therefore I am  
not of the Body, Is it therefore not of the  
Body? And if the Ear shall say, Because I  
am not the Eye, I am not of the Body, Is  
it therefore not of the Body? And by Pa-  
rity of Argument, in that *Greater* Body,  
which We call the Universe, Does any in-  
dividual Member cease to be *such*, and, as

SERM. *such*, an Object of the Divine Care, because He has not the same Gift or Function with Another? It is sufficient to all the Purposes of our Well-being and Happiness, that under all that Diversity, which runs through the Works of God, His Paternal Care extends in Common to Us All; That, as ‘*We are All His Off-spring*,’ ‘*so He is not far from Any of Us*,’ and, in a Word, ‘*That He is no Respector of Persons, but, in every Nation, He that feareth God and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of Him.*’

HAD Things, indeed, been put upon the *opposite* Foot to This; Had the *Christian* Dispensation been, in Truth, what Some through over-acted Zeal may suppose it to be, the *Only* Mean of bringing Men to Virtue and Happiness, I do not see, How to avoid One of these Two Conclusions, That either this Revelation must have been universal, and common to the Whole Human Race; or if not, That the Father of the Universe has not sufficiently provided for All His Off-spring. But, while the Contrary of This is true in Fact, and while Things are so circumstanced,



stanced, that even Those, who have not SERM.  
a Law or Revelation from God, can ‘do IX.  
‘by Nature the Things contained in the  
‘Law’, and, whilst every Man’s Talent  
or That for which He is accountable, is  
measured by His *Ability*, in this Consti-  
tution of Things, I see no Room for the  
Impeachment of the Divine Conduct, for  
this Diversity of Powers ; but on the  
Contrary I see, How it is possible for  
a Man with a lesser Talent, if using it  
aright, to eclipse in Happiness and Ho-  
nour the Man, that had a greater. For,  
if We make a fair Estimate of Things,  
the Person, that has done well, with *lesser*  
Helps, will be found more deserving than  
Another, that has not surpassed Him in  
Well-doing, though possessed of greater ;  
and consequently, if the Supreme Judge  
will *render to every Man according to*  
*His Works*, the Former will stand inti-  
tled to the greater Reward of the Two ;  
since, in Truth, His *Work*, or Virtue, is  
greater.

SHOULD it be objected, *in the third*  
*Place*, That General Laws are Things of  
too much Consequence to be suspended or  
over-ruled.

To

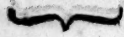
SERM. To This I answer : It must be confessed,

IX.  fed, that General Laws (or that Things should in the General proceed in a certain *stated and ordinary* Way) is a Constitution, that has its Use ; ‘ Since otherwise ‘ there could be no Prudence or Design ‘ in Man, no rational Expectation of Effects from Causes, no Schemes of Action projected, nor any regular Execution.’ But, though This may be a sufficient Reason, against *too frequent* a Repetition of Miraculous Operations ; not so, against those Divine Interposures that are Here supposed ; Because the bare Belief of God’s having raised up, in different Parts and Ages of the World, some extraordinary Lights or Teachers for the Benefit of Mankind, will not, by any *just Deduction*, encourage the Disuse of Our Natural Powers, or induce Any of the ill Effects above supposed ; and, least of All, is that Eternal Rule of Equity disturbed by any Revelation from God, I mean That, which relates to the impartial Distribution of Rewards and Punishments ; on the Contrary, there is no Proposition, I think, *more* plainly advanced in Scripture

ture than This, That God *will render to* SERM.  
*every Man according to His Works,* and IX.  
 that (a just Estimate being made of the  
 different Means and Capacities) where  
*Much is given, Much also will be required;*  
*and where Little has been given, He will*  
*require in Proportion Little.* An Abuse,  
 I confess, may be made of the best and  
 wisest Constitution, and such false Infe-  
 rences be raised from some Articles of  
 Revelation, as may give some Colour to  
 an Objection of this Kind: Thus the Be-  
 lief of Miraculous Interposures may, by  
 Our Sloth or Folly, occasion a Neglect of  
 the ordinary Means; and some weak Pro-  
 fessors may be found, who lay so great a  
 Stress on Seeing with *Another's* Eyes, as  
 to make it a Point of Virtue to put out  
 Their Own. But no Constitution, that is  
 just and good in itself, is responsible for  
 its Abuse; otherwise even Natural Reli-  
 gion will be brought into Danger, and  
 that Argument of the *Atheist* be unan-  
 swerable, That, by laying aside the very  
*Notion* of a God, We shall get rid of all  
 the Enthusiasm and Superstition, that have  
 been built upon it. But, I hope, no con-  
 siderate



SERM. fiderate *Theist* is in Danger of being staggered from this Quarter; and the same

IX.  Kind of Answer, which He would make, in Defence of Natural Religion, will serve as well in Support of Revealed; for Neither of Them are responsible for any ill Consequence, that does not *naturally* flow from Either, but which owes its Rise to the Neglect of that just Exercise of Reason, which is alike required under Both.

As to the *fourth and last* Objection, that is grounded on the Supposition of Unsteadiness on the Part of God, Here I answer with St. *James* in the Text,— That, should these Divine Interposures, at due Distances of Time, be supposed, We may with Reason conclude, They are as much a Part of God's Original Plan, as is the more stated and ordinary Course of Things; and, if so, the One does no more bespeak any Instability in Him, than the Other; since Both, for any Thing that appears to the Contrary, may have been alike contrived and determined by Him, long before They were put in Execution.

IT may be so, which Side of the Question soever We take; I mean, Whether We conceive of God, as foreseeing How Mankind in their successive Generations would act, or only, as determining, That He would, in His great Goodness, advance such and such Steps, in Support of Truth and Virtue, provided Things were so circumstanced, amongst Us, as made it to be expedient. SERM.  
IX.

THOUGH, after All, it should not be overlooked, That there is this Difference between the Natural and Moral World, that the One, being merely *Passive*, is subjected of Course to certain pre-established Laws, from which it *cannot* deviate; whereas, in the Moral World, the Ideas of *Liberty* and Free-Agency must be taken in, and since These may produce a Change in the State of Things, and a Change for the Worse, Here it is no Wonder, if the Supreme Physician should have determined to accommodate His Regimen to the Patient's Case, and throw in some additional Helps, when the ordinary Means of Health have (through Our Default) miscarried.

BUT,

SERM. BUT, instead of prosecuting this Part  
 IX. of the Argument any further, I shall conclude with some Reflexions, that grow out of the present Subject, and may tend to *inforce* What has been already offered.

AND Here, *first*, How clearly soever We are able to reason in those Cases, where Truth and Justice are concerned, not so in those Points that relate to *Wisdom*; especially the Wisdom, not of a Being, who acts in so small a Sphere, as the Greatest of the Sons of Men; but the Wisdom of that Being who is related to the *Whole*, and has, for that Reason, so formed His Measures, as is most conducive to the *Good* of the *Whole*; and consequently, unless We had an Eye, like His, capable of taking in the *Whole*, We are not capable of judging, What is best and most fitting to be done upon the *Whole*; but on the Contrary We should here measure our Reasoning by Our Powers; for, in such Points as these, 'A Mind, that sees not infinitely, can see Nothing fully,' and, therefore, instead of assuming to Ourselves the Government of the Universe; or dictating to God, We should  
 humbly



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SERM.

IX.

humbly confess, That We are Here no competent Judges, that *His Ways are unsearchable, and His Judgments past finding out.*

It could be wished, That this Branch of true Humility was more constantly attended to, in Our Reasoning upon the Divine Proceedings: The considerate *Theist* will find ample Occasion for it, should He undertake the Defence of the Works of Nature ; and if the *Moral* World is as truly a Subject of Divine Government, as the *Natural*, He must not be surpris'd to find the like Occasion for it Here.

It must be confessed, That this good Principle, like any other, is capable of being abused, and the grossest Errors may have sheltered Themselves under the Notion of an *Implicit* Submission to the Divine Wisdom and Authority ; but All that can with Reason be inferred from Hence, is to guard against this Abuse, by admitting Nothing into Religion *contrary* to Reason ; Not, surely, to give into the opposite Extream of hastily rejecting every Thing, for which We cannot assign the Reason. For This, in Reality, is to aspire

at

SERM. at Something *above* Our State, and to make

IX. Our present Stock of Knowledge, partial and imperfect as it is, the sole Test, Standard, or Measure, by which every Truth, whether Divine or Human, must stand, or fall.

ANOTHER Remark, that grows out of the present Subject, is This: That the Cause of Virtue, and Religion, is a Cause, not unworthy of God's Interposing for its Support, at what Times, and in what Way, Himself thinks fit and proper; and consequently, though under the *Christian* Dispensation, We have the *most* remarkable Instance of this Kind, yet, if We look back on the Historic Account of the Times preceding the Incarnation, We must not be surprised to find the Supreme Lord and Governor of the World, advancing *Many* Things in His Course of Providence, for the Discouragement of Vice and Defence of Virtue. A Truth, which *Palestine* and *Egypt*, A Truth, which the remoter States of *Assyria* and *Babylon*, add, if you will, the Destruction of the incestuous *Sodom*, and that greater Deluge which swept off the World of the Ungodly, in  
the

the Days of *Noah*, can sufficiently attest and confirm ; concerning Each of which, SERM.  
IX.

*We may say, Great and marvellous are Thy Works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy Ways, O King of Saints; Who shall not fear and glorify Thy Name?*

SUCH were those truly just and *rational* Reflexions, which Our Predecessors in the Faith made upon the Divine Dispensations, and I can see no Reason Why every Friend and Well-wisher to the Cause of Virtue should not (after Their Example) do the Same.

IN vain is it objected, That We have nothing similar to these Facts in *Our Own* Times ; unless it can be proved, That One Age or Country must be made a Rule or Standard for the Rest. Not to observe, That the good Influence of these Facts is far more extensive than the Facts Themselves ; They contain more than a wholesome Instruction to *that Part* of Mankind, which were Cotemporaries with Them. As long as Their Historic Evidence stands unrefuted, They may be compared to so many stately Monuments, or Pillars, raised by the Hand of God, and charged with



SERM. such fair Inscriptions, as Time itself is not

IX. able to efface ; They are still legible by Us  
 in these latter Days ; and, I trust, will continue to be read with Advantage, when Our Heads are laid in the Grave.

AND, *Lastly*, considering that truly good and religious Use, which both has been and may still be made of these Things, I may venture to add, still further, That, should any One imagine Himself to be so *complete* a Proficient in all Points of Virtue and Religion, as not to require this Method of Instruction, for *His Own* Particular, still He may do a real Disservice to the Cause of Virtue, by endeavouring to divert the Regards of Others from it ; and to do it, upon no better a Pretence, than This, That every Man is sent into the World, with a sufficient Furniture of His Own, appears to Me as unreasonable a Conduct in the present Case, as it would be in any Other Science. In Other Sciences, let the Powers of Nature be what They will, no prudent and considerate Enquirer would refuse such additional Helps, as are thrown in His Way ; much less would He think it beneath Him to consult

sult the most finished Performances, that SERM.  
came from the *Chief* Masters in Each ; but IX.  
in Religion, it seems, We must generously  
protest against all such Assistance, though  
a Science of far greater Importahce than  
the Rest, and where, for that single Rea-  
son, I should think, common Prudence  
would induce Us to embrace every good  
Help, or Means of Improvement, that is  
put into Our Hands.

N 2

SERM.

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S E R M O N X.

The Revelation of *Noah* examined.

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H E B. xi. 7.

*By Faith Noah being warned of God of Things not seen as yet, moved with Fear, prepared an Ark to the Saving of His House; by which He condemned the World, and became Heir of the Righteousness, which is by Faith.*

SERM.  
X.

**T**HE Author of this *Epistle*, in the Beginning of this *Chapter*, gives Us that large and *Catholic* Definition of Faith, as may be applied more or less to All good Men in All Ages of the World: *Faith is the Evidence of Things not seen, and the Substance (or Expectation)*



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pectation) of *Things hoped for*. And, a SERM.  
few Lines after, He inforces His former X.  
Definition by Another of the *same* Extent,  
*Without Faith*, says He, *it is impossible to*  
*please God, for He that cometh to God,*  
*must believe that He is, and that He is*  
*the Rewarder of Them that diligently seek*  
*Him.*

GOD, and Whatever We have Ground  
to expect from Him, whether in Reward  
of Virtue or Punishment of Sin, are *Things*  
*not seen*, They are Objects hid from the  
bodily Eye; and therefore, if We would  
converse with Them aright, it must be by  
the Help of *Another* Principle, I mean  
That which demonstrates the Existence  
of God, with Those Attributes of His  
which are the Ground and Basis of What-  
ever We can with Reason expect from  
Him.

IF this was St. *Paul's* Notion of *Faith*,  
it is so far from being Something oppo-  
site to Reason, that it coincides with the  
right Exercise of it. His Definition fits  
the Religion of Nature as well as Reveal-  
ed, and opens wide its Arms to embrace  
All good Men under Both; since in Both

SERM. We have the same just Sense of Deity, the same Dependence on God's Protection, and the same Subjection to His Authority, *i. e.* The good Principle is the *same* for Substance in Both, though in the Latter it assumes a *different* Form, and is applied to some *New* Duties, that grow out of some *New* Discoveries, which God, for wise Reasons thinks fit to make: By *Faith Noah, when warned of God concerning Things not seen* (meaning the approaching Deluge) *was moved with Fear, &c.*

IN Handling of this Subject, let Us, *in the first Place*, take a more distinct Survey of the History itself. *Secondly*, Consider that perfect Harmony or Correspondence, which there is between Natural Religion and *This* Branch of Revealed. *Thirdly*, Examine that noble Moral that is contained under it.

THIS Piece of History, to which the Author of this *Epistle* refers, is related more at Large in the *vith*, *viith*, and *viiith* Chapters of *Genesis*. It begins with Giving an Account of the most deplorable Corruption in Point of Morals, which in *Noah's* Days had overspread the then *Habitable Parts*

*Parts of the Earth : And God saw that the Wickedness of Man was great in the Earth, and that Every Imagination of the Thoughts of His Heart was only evil continually.* SERM. X.

I am obliged, in Justice to the Subject, to adjust the true Meaning of this Place ; because it contains the Ground or Reason of the ensuing Judgment, but which has been frequently misunderstood, and turned to a Sense absolutely foreign from the Writer's Design. We need only consider Things in Connexion to see, That the Historian's Design was not to represent the State of Mankind in *Every* Age, but that *special* Corruption, that *uncommon* Degeneracy which prevailed in that *particular* Age ; such, as might justify the Divine Proceedings, and assign the Reasons, Why the Governor of the Universe (good and merciful as He is) should seem to step out of His *ordinary* Road, and proceed against Them with so uncommon a Degree of Severity. Such was Our Author's Drift ; and I think the Terms, He makes Use of, well express it : *And God saw the Wickedness of Man was great, and that Every Formation* (for such is the Im-



SERM. port of the Original) and that Every For-  
 X. *mation of the Thoughts of His Heart was  
 only evil continually, and it repented the  
 Lord, that He had made Man, &c.*

*AND the Lord said, I will destroy  
 Man from off the Face of the Earth.* The  
 Historian affects Here the greatest Strength  
 and Energy of Style ; He labours for Ex-  
 pression, and crouds in many an Image  
 with Design to exaggerate the Charge,  
 and represent an Age ripe for Destruction.  
 It is not therefore the Workmanship of  
*Nature* that He condemns, but *Our Own*.  
 It is Something *formed* and fashioned by  
*Ourselves*, and where Men Themselves  
 are the *Only* Agents. He alludes to those  
 bad Schemes of Sin and Purposes of Mis-  
 chief that are *formed*, wrought up, and  
 laboured in that inward Forge, the Hu-  
 man Brain ; it was this Formation of  
 Our Own, He says, was so *bad* and *wholly*  
*bad*, *bad* without Alloy of Goodness, and  
*bad continually*.

I SEE the highest Good Sense and Con-  
 sistency of Argument in the Divine Writer,  
 if *thus* explained. But, I fear, He will  
 not come off so well upon the *Other*  
 Scheme,

Scheme, I mean, That which applies the SERM.  
Charge to Mankind in Common ; for this X.  
Interpretation makes Him assign this Reason, for God's Cutting off Mankind in  
One Age, because He found amongst  
Them as great a Corruption as what (by  
Supposition) is common to Them in *Every*  
Age. Happy had it been, indeed, for  
the Antediluvian World, had their History  
and this Comment agreed ; but, alas !  
So *Extraordinary* a Judgment bespeaks as  
*Extraordinary* a Guilt.

THEIR Crimes kept Pace with their  
Calamities ; and We may infer the Great-  
ness of Their Sin by the Greatness of their  
Punishment. *The Earth* (as the Historian  
tells Us) *was filled with Violence*, alluding,  
I suppose, to the Chief and Master-Sin of  
the Age. An Age famed, perhaps, for  
Military Strength and Prowess, and when  
all Things were carried on, not as becomes  
Intelligent Agents, according to the Laws  
of *Reason*, but by Brutal Force and Appet-  
ites, by Acts of Rapine, and by Dint of  
Arms. Thus this Infection spread through  
all Ranks and Orders of Men from the  
Highest down to the Lowest, and, all  
Re-

SERM. Restraint from the Quarter of Authority  
 X. (whether Divine or Human) being now removed, Men gave the Rein to Their Lusts ; the most foul and infamous Immoralities were practised without Controul, Truth and Probity had taken Their Flight ; and, instead of Peace and Harmony, the Whole World was in Danger of becoming one continued Scene of Confusion and Disorder.

BUT, from this Description of the General Depravity, let Us proceed, *Secondly*, to consider that noble *Exception* from it, which We have in the Person of *Noah*. ‘ It is a Sign of a Great Soul (says ‘ the *Roman* Philosopher) for a Man to ‘ retain His Integrity in the Midst of *Public* Defection.’ Had the Author of this Remark been acquainted with the present History, I am persuaded He would not have scrupled to apply it Here. He must have confessed, That, in the *Patriarch*’s Person, We have a most excellent Character indeed. *Noah* was a *just Person*, and perfect in His Generation, and walked with God. And *Noah* found Favour in the Eyes of the Lord, i. e. The Lord designed



to exempt Him from the approaching SERM.  
 Judgments, that hung over His wicked X.  
 Cotemporaries. But to proceed, A good }  
 Man will have the Good of his *Species* at  
 Heart, and the more truly religious He is,  
 so much the more desirous He will be to  
 promote that Good. Accordingly We  
 are told, That, as *Noah* was a *just* or  
 righteous *Person*, so He was a *Preacher*  
*of Righteousness*, He did not confine what  
 Truth and Virtue He had to Himself;  
 His Ambition was to propagate the Same  
 in Others; Tho' (like many of His Suc-  
 cessors in that good Work) His Endea-  
 vors did not meet with Success. Thus  
 they had before Their Eyes a just Man,  
 a Man of unblemished Reputation, who  
 bravely protested against Their wicked  
 Practices, tho' at the Hazard of His  
 Own Safety and Repose. Nay, more,  
 (for it is no unreasonable Supposition) who  
 might also advertise Them of the approach-  
 ing Deluge; and, the better to convince  
 Them He was in earnest, He applied Him-  
 self, without Loss of Time, to prepare  
 the Vessel for His Own Security. If so,  
 He taught not only by *Words*, but by  
*Facts*;

SERM. *Facts* ; and These of such a Kind, as had  
 X. a Natural Tendency to arrest Their Re-  
 gards, and turn Their Thoughts upon those  
 Calamities that were coming upon Them.

GOD is too firm and steady a Being, to retract any wise Resolutions that He has formed. Accordingly, after the *Long-Suffering of God had now waited* in vain for their Repentance, We are told That, *in the Six Hundreth Year of the Patriarch's Life, in the second Month, in the seventeenth Day of the Month, were all the Fountains of the great Deep broken up, and the Windows of Heaven opened, &c.* Thus the Divine Vengeance unlocked Her Stores, what Collections of Waters were gathered in the Clouds descended in flowing Rains, while (by the Falling in of the Earth) the subterraneous Stores broke loose, and Both together (like two Confederates) unite their Forces to execute the Divine Commission, and chastise a bold and incorrigible World.

WHILE this *Man of God* (by the Divine Command) retires within the Ark, and There preserves the *Seeds* of a future Race, by which the Earth should be re-peopled.

peopled. Such was the Revelation made SERM.  
to this Antediluvian Sage, and such the X.  
Event, that most punctually answered to it. 

But, having considered the History, let Us  
examine Our *Second* Remark concerning  
the *Agreement* between Natural Religion  
and this Branch of Revealed, and see if  
it will not hold good in the Case before  
Us? As *Noah* had already a just Sense of  
Deity, He had that *Faith* in God which  
is common to all Religion, whether Na-  
tural or Revealed. He had that firm Be-  
lief of God's Existence, with those Attri-  
butes of His, which qualify Him for the  
Government of the Universe. He confi-  
dered, That he was a Being of *purser Eyes*;  
*than to behold Iniquity*, and might compare  
the Judgments that were now denounc-  
ed, with that enormous Wickedness,  
which covered the Earth. Nor could He  
be ignorant, How expedient it was for the  
Restoration of Truth and Virtue, to have  
the Stage of Life supplied with a new Set  
of Actors, when its old Inhabitants, by  
Supposition, were grown so universally  
corrupt, that there was no Hopes of their  
Being reclaimed. He also knew, How  
firm



SERM. firm and steddý God is to His Word, and  
 X. that, as He does not form His Resolutions  
 without a *sufficient* Reason, so He does not  
 want for Power to put them in Execu-  
 tion. Such was the *Faith* of *Noah*; and  
 a Soul filled with so truly wise and ra-  
 tional a Principle as this, when *warned*  
*of God*, might well *be moved with Fear*;  
 whether by that *Fear* is meant that aw-  
 ful and religious Regard which is due to  
 God Himself, or rather as just a Sense of  
 the Judgments denounced by Him. And  
 well might He apply Himself, in Obedi-  
 ence to the Divine Direction, to provide  
 for His own Safety. I see Nothing in  
 this Whole Conduct, but what will bear  
 the closest Test of Reason.

HERE appears to have been no melan-  
 choly Fit, nor groundless and superstitious  
 Fears; no warm Enthusiasm, or bold  
 presumptuous Hopes; no Starts of Fan-  
 cy and Opinion, much less the Coinage  
 and Chimeras of a *wild* distempered  
 Brain; but all good Sense and Reason,  
 and (I may add) Natural Religion, itself,  
 applied to Some *New Discoveries*, not un-  
 worthy of Deity to make, or the Human  
 Under-

Understanding to receive. So good was SERM.  
His Conduct itself. And now let Us see, X.  
if it was not as good in its After-Consequence? *He prepared the Ark, says the*  
*Apostle, for the Preservation of His House ;*  
*by which, He condemned the World, and*  
*became Heir of the Righteousness, that is*  
*by Faith.*

OUR Lord, who taught the same Doctrine for Substance, with all the Prophets of former Times, observes in a certain Place, *That the Men of Nineveh should arise in Judgment against the Men of that Generation, and condemn Them, because They repented upon the Preaching of Jonah ;* while the *Jews* of Our Saviour's Age continued in Their Impenitency, tho' favoured with a Greater Teacher. He observes to the same Effect, *That the Queen of the South will arise in Judgment, and condemn the Jews of Our Saviour's Age, because such was Her Love of Truth, that She came from the uttermost Parts of the Earth, to converse with Solomon, when the Fame of His Wisdom had reached Her Ears, while the Jews of Our Saviour's Times, tho' they had Their Own*  
*Messiah*

SERM. *Messiah* now amongst Them, the *Angel*  
 X. *of the Covenant*, the *promised Seed*, the *Son*  
 of *God* incarnate (and Him not waiting  
 for their Arrival, but travelling from Ci-  
 ty to City; to find them up, and con-  
 firming His Mission by Cures and Miracles  
 of the same friendly and salutary Kind  
 with His Doctrine) They neither receiv-  
 ed His Person, nor embraced His Instruc-  
 tions; That is, They trifled with much  
*greater Means of Salvation*, and These  
 when had upon easier Terms, for the  
 Truth, in that Case, lay not across the  
 Seas. She was not removed to some fo-  
 reign and distant Country. She was post-  
 ed at Their Doors, and uttered Her Voice  
*in the Streets*, She cried in the chief Places,  
 &c.

THUS the Queen of *Sheba* and the  
 Inhabitants of *Nineveh* will condemn the  
*Jews*, not by Passing Sentence upon  
 Them; for That is the Act of the Judge;  
 but as They Both shewed in Fact, That  
 the Obedience, which God expects, is a  
 practicable Thing; nay, more, capable of  
 being practised under much *less* Helps and  
 Advantages for Instruction, than what  
 the



the Latter had. That the Conduct of SERM.  
the *Jews* appears without all Excuse, X.  
when considered in so fair a Contrast, and  
set in Opposition to the Former. And  
the *Effect* will be accordingly: The One  
being *cast* in Judgment, while the Other  
comes off with Honour and Applause. I  
do not think the Comparison holds good  
in *all* Respects: But, however, it may  
throw some Light upon the Case before  
Us. *Noah* condemned the *World*, by shew-  
ing, in His Own Deportment, What They  
ought to have done, and, had They acted,  
as became Beings endued with Reason,  
would certainly have done. The Moral  
Deformity of the One Conduct is so much  
the better seen, when set in *Opposition* to  
the Grace and Beauty of the Other. But  
I suspect, That Our Author had Something  
*further* in View. It is well known, That  
*Noah* had a Controversy with the *World*;  
and the *World* in Turn with *Noah*. And  
the Affair was not, as yet, decided, Which  
was in the Right: Things, as yet, were,  
to all Appearance, in Suspense. During  
all which Interval of Time, I do not  
question (considering the Corruption of

SERM. the Age) but this good Man had a very  
 X. uneasy Situation amongst Them; if not  
 treated as a bold Impostor, and obliged to  
 digest many a prophane Scoff, thrown out  
 both against Himself, and that Vessel which  
 by God's Command He was now building  
 before Their Eyes. But Whatever is *done* a-  
 right, will turn up right, and Whatever is  
 wrong, will turn up wrong; and tho'  
 in Human Judicatures it is frequently o-  
 therwise, with God (who judges all Things  
 according to Truth) We may be assured,  
 That Truth, how much soever depressed  
 at present, will become uppermost at last,  
 and prevail to the Joy and Glory of its  
 Friends, and the utter Silence and Confu-  
 sion of its Enemies; and such (says the A-  
 postle) was the Case before Us: *By which,*  
*He condemned the World, and became Heir*  
*of the Righteousness which is by Faith.*  
 The Event turned up to *Noah's* Advan-  
 tage; and God at length decides the Mat-  
 ter in Dispute in His Favour. He vindi-  
 cates, to the Full, Both the Cause and  
 Character of His Servant; while the Lat-  
 ter comes off with Honour, He casts or  
*condemns* His Adversaries before the Bar of  
 God.

God. With so much Justness may that Reflexion of the Holy Prophet be applied to the present Case, *No Weapon, that is formed against Thee, shall prosper, and Every Tongue, which rises in Judgment against Thee, shalt Thou condemn; This is the Heritage of the Servants of the Lord, and Their Righteousness (i. e. Their Vindication or Reward) is of Me, says the Lord.* Among the Many Beauties that belong to the Divine Administration this is One, That Our Interest and Duty are well connected and secured, by too strong a Tye to be dissolved and broken; such is the Voice of Natural Religion, and it is confirmed in Revealed. Thus did this truly wise and religious Man reap the good *Effects* of His *Faith* in God. His good Sense, and just Exercise of Reason, His Fidelity, and firm Attachment to the Cause of Piety and Virtue, turned up to His Account. His Keeping Himself clear from the Pollutions of the World, His Shining like some un sullied Light, *amidst a perverse and crooked Generation*, secured Him the Divine Acceptance, and derived upon His Head the amplest Marks of His Maker's Favour.



SERM. When, besides His being preserved from  
 X. that Destruction which befel the Rest of  
 Mankind, He had that *additional* Honour  
 conferred upon Him of Entering into Co-  
*venant* with God, and of being the Second  
 Father of the Human Race. Tho', if St.  
*Peter's* Reflexion be received for true,  
 this Deliverance from a temporal Destruction  
 may be considered, in this *further*  
 Light, as a Type or Emblem of some  
 greater Deliverance, which this good Man,  
 and All that tread in the Steps of his Faith  
 and Virtue, shall obtain from those Judg-  
 ments and Calamities which are reserved  
 for the Wicked in the World to come.

THUS have I considered, *first*, the  
 History itself; and, *secondly*, That Har-  
 mony or Agreement which subsists be-  
 tween Natural Religion and *this* Branch  
 of Revealed. I am not insensible, a  
 Subject of this Kind will furnish Us  
 with Many useful Reflexions; but, as I  
 propose to consider These more at Large,  
 in the next Discourse, I will conclude  
 at Present with the following Remark,  
 That We find in Fact, How great is  
 the *Force* of Custom! Society in *Error*  
 has

has the same Effects as it has in Truth ; I SERM.  
mean, That the Strength of our Attach- X.  
ment to Either rises, in Proportion to the  
*Numbers* by which the Cause is espoused :  
But *this Our Way is Our Folly* ; for  
Truth and Error are Things not to be  
judged of by *Numbers*. All true Know-  
ledge consists in the Conformity of Our  
Ideas, and Apprehensions of Things, to the  
Things themselves ; and the Latter, be-  
ing independent of Us, do not change or  
vary as Our Apprehensions of Them do.  
Such is the true State of the Case. And  
You will find it turn up so in the History  
before Us.

WHAT Man that looks back on the  
Age of *Noah*, or compares His Conduct  
with the After-Event, would *follow a*  
*Multitude* either in *Thinking* or in *Acting*  
what is *Evil* ? Who would not rather  
undergo the Charge of Singularity, and  
whatever Terms of Reproach are cast up-  
on Him, than desert the Cause of Truth,  
or admit One single Circumstance into His  
Profession or Practice, which, upon En-  
quiry, appears to be inconsistent with it ?  
If Truth be more powerful than *Num-*  
bers,

SERM. *bers*, it is our wisest Part to stand by it,  
 X. tho' We should not have *Numbers* on Our  
 Side. As *Numbers* do not in the Least  
 affect the Truth and Nature of Things at  
 Present, so they will avail as little in the  
 Day of Accounts.

WHEN I consider the Cause of Truth  
 in this Light, I cannot but observe, That  
 (how strong and invincible soever it is in  
 itself) it acquires a *New* Strength from  
 that Quarter by which it is supported.  
 It has the *God of Truth* on its Side. In  
 vain therefore do We oppose it, either  
 with the Secular Arm on the One Hand,  
 or Popular Mode, Custom, and Example  
 on the Other. In vain do We think to  
 keep it under with Pains and Penalties,  
 with Bonds or Exile, with Fire and  
 Sword; should All the Powers of Earth,  
 or Hell, unite against it, it will certainly  
 prevail, and become uppermost at  
 last. That What the Oracle of *Delphi*  
 is reported to have said, of the famous  
*Thesfeus*, may with equal Justness be ap-  
 plied to Truth: It is like a Bladder that  
 may be forced under Water, but cannot  
 be drowned: Or, to borrow a *nobler* Si-  
 mile



My Design is to touch upon a different String, and, taking for granted (what, I suppose, as yet, has never been disproved) That *this* Branch of the Scripture-History is true, I would, *in the first Place*, humbly enquire, What useful Reflexions may be made upon it; and, *secondly*, obviate the most considerable Objections that may be raised against it. SERM. XI.

THOUGH, if any Man regards it as a *Fable* only, He should still remember that *Fables* have their Use as well as real Histories. And it may be worth our While to employ Our Thoughts on the present Fable, provided it conveys some *good* Instruction; provided, upon Examining the different Forms, and Personages, Characters, and Catastrophes, We should find All point at one *common* End, and subserve that excellent Design, which is not unworthy of the Supreme Wisdom to prosecute, the *Moral* Good. By the *Moral* Good I mean not mere Morality, as contra-distinguished from Religion, but Our Behaving aright in *every* Relation, whether Divine or Human; and, I think, Our History

SERM. History points out, *in the first Place*, the  
 XI. *Worth* and Excellency of This.

WERE it possible that *beautious* Order, which God has established, as the Moral Governor, should be overthrown; Were it possible to divide Virtue from its Reward, and Sin from its Punishment, ~~the~~ the *Nature* of Either would be still the same.

THE Practice of Truth and Virtue are the same, whatever be the After-Effects; it shines not, like opake Bodies, in a *borrowed* Light; but (like the Lamp of Day) in its Own.

IT has a Grace and Comeliness belonging to it, that grows out of itself; and which, like the *Sovereign* Beauty, deserves to be loved upon its *Own* Account. In Proof of This, You need only compare the Conduct of *Noah*, with That of His Cotemporaries, and ask Yourselfs, If the gallant Stand which He made against the Corruption of the Times, If His *firm* Adherence to His Own good Principles, and as just Endeavours to rectify the Lives of Others, would have lost one single Charm, though God should not have exempted Him

mile from the Text, She is like that fa- SERM.  
cred *Ark* or Vessel, in which Her Friend X.  
and Patron was secured, that rode safely  
tilting over the Waves, and triumphant-  
ly out-braved the Storm in which His E-  
nemies were lost.



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## S E R M O N XI.

The Revelation of *Noah* examined.

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H E B. xi. 7.

*By Faith Noah being warned of God of Things not seen as yet, moved with Fear, prepared an Ark to the Saving of His House; by which He condemned the World, and became Heir of the Righteousness, which is by Faith.*

SERM.  
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**O**THERS, who are more equal to the Work, may discuss the *Philosophical* Account of the Deluge, and decide (if able) By what Ways and Means the Divine Power brought this large Collection of Waters upon the Earth.

MY

Him from the Flood, but (for Reasons SERM.  
best known to Himself) have suffered Him XI.  
to be involved in the general Ruin.

Who can read that Description which  
One of Our Own Poets gives of the Se-  
raph *Abdiel*, that retained His Integrity,  
though encompassed with so many Apo-  
state Spirits, without confessing, That His  
Conduct was truly great, let the Event  
be what it will: ‘ So spake the Seraph  
‘ *Abdiel*, faithful He among the Faithless,  
‘ faithful Only found, amongst innumer-  
‘ able False—Unmoved, Unshaken, Unse-  
‘ duced, Unterrified ; His Loyalty He  
‘ kept, His Love, His Zeal, nor Num-  
‘ ber, nor Example, with Him wrought  
‘ to swerve from Truth, or change His  
‘ constant Mind—Though single from a-  
‘ midst Them forth He past, long Way  
‘ through Scorn, which He sustained su-  
‘ perior—Nor of Violence feared Aught.’

I NEED not observe, That, whether the  
Agent be of the Angelic or Human Kind,  
the Virtue practised is still the same, tho’  
in either Case, how just and reasonable  
soever it be in itself, it appears to a double  
Advan-

SERM. Advantage, when set in *Opposition* to the  
 XI. contrary Sin.

BUT the same noble Moral bolts out to View from *Another* Part of this History, I mean from the Event or Consequence. Whoever treats of the Moral Good, mentions That which is the Glory of *All* Intelligent Agents, from the Highest down to the Lowest. God Himself acts upon this Principle, and is so well advised of its Worth, that He is determined to encourage the Same in Others. He does so, by conferring the most solid Marks of His Approbation wherever He finds it to be observed, and as sensible Marks of His Displeasure where it is overlooked.

THUS the *Natural* Good is pressed into the Service of the Moral. It is in a Sense subjected to it; and, if so, it leaves Us to infer the superior Worth and Excellence of it. In plain Terms, God has frequently made Our Ease and Pleasure to give Way, for the Sake of Truth and Virtue, but never (that I can find) has He dispensed with Truth and Virtue, for the Sake of Ease and Pleasure. If, therefore, Ease and Pleasure may justly be desired,



fired, How much *more* should Truth and Virtue be desired, when the Former are by a Divine Constitution subjected to the Latter. And, therefore, if God be a good Judge of *Worth*, the Latter is the most excellent of the Two.

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To illustrate This, let it be considered, For what End has the All-wise Author of Nature erected so fair a *Theater* as Our Earth, and supplied it with all Things requisite for the Use and Ornament of the Actors, which He sends upon it? For what Ends is the Sun obliged to continue His Light and Heat? Or the Heavens to send down their Refreshing Showers? Why does God renew the Produce of the Ground, and subject it to Our Use? Or, to bring the Enquiry still nearer Home, To what End are We Ourselves so *curiously* and *wonderfully* made? Or, Why is the Hand of Nature continually at Work to produce so much Beauty and Proportion in the *outward* Frame, or support that *secret* Harmony and just Measure of Vital Motion within? Was *All* This done merely for Our Amusement or Enjoyment? Or rather That, after so great an *Apparatus*

SERM. *ratus* of Nature, We should act some

XI. Part that is worthy of it? And What can

That possibly be, besides the Moral Good? Since by *That* and by *That* alone We act up to the Dignity of Our Own Species, and worthy of that Dominion which God has given Us over the Rest. If *This* be wanting, I had almost said, the Chief End of God's Creation is defeated, so far as it relates to Us; and all that Beauty which results from this large Dependency, and subordinate State of Beings, is overthrown.

IN vain are the several Movements of Nature; the Sun, the Sky, the Air, the Produce of the Ground, with whatever else Our Maker has subjected to Our Use, are rendered useless and vain. For, surely, the Author of Nature (All-wise and All-perfect as He is) never intended by this Profusion of Bounty, That We should make no better an Use and Improvement of it, than (like the Antediluvian Sinners) to turn His Gifts *against* Himself, and prostitute Our Powers and Talents to a Series of Actions Morally-deformed and Ill-deserving; such as must needs excite Displeasure within His Holy Breast, and make Him,

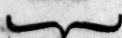
Him, as the Scripture emphatically ex- SERM.  
presses it, *repent of the Works of His Hands.* XI.

When I consider Things in this Light, I no longer wonder, That God should *curse* the Ground, *i. e.* One small Part of His Creation which He had subjected to *Our* Use, upon *Our* Account; or, if some great and general Corruption has covered the Earth, That He should cover it with a Flood, and so let Us *read* Our Sin in the Punishment, by introducing that Deformity into the Natural World, which best suits a far worse Deformity which Ourselves first had brought into the Moral.

THE *wise Man* tells Us, That God has *made every Thing for Himself* (or, as it might have been rendered, *for That which answers and corresponds to it*) and the *Wicked for the Day of Wrath*. It must be owned, The Deluge greatly defaced the Works of Nature; it introduced a new Scene of Confusion on this Lower World. The *Earth was again without Form and void*.

BUT, alas! Was there not as great a Chaos and Confusion first produced by  
Our-



SERM. XI.  Ourselfs? What else is a System of Moral Agents, from whence Moral Good is banished? Sure, if the Fact be presupposed, it is impossible for any wise and considerate Man not to discern a certain *Fitness* and *Proportion* in the Divine Conduct, upon this Occasion. But this Our History does more than set forth the intrinsic Worth and Excellency of the Moral Good; it has, in the *second Place*, this further Use, That it refutes the Chief Objections and Discouragements that, in the present State of Things, may arise against it. Truth is alike sacred, in whatever Form it appears; its Obligation is the Same in *Civil* as in *Religious* Matters, though sometimes meeting with equal Discouragements under Both.

BUT let the *Patriot*, or *Martyr*, consult the Life of *Noah*, and then ask Himself, Whether He can be a Loser by adhering to What is right and true, though (like *Noah*) cast on the Worst of Times, and though the general Current is so strong against Him, That, when He comes to muster His Friends, He finds so general a Defection, that He has but One  
single

single Arm, and This invifible, left Him on which to lean. What, though the Friend and Patron of Truth and Public Good has His Patience fufficiently exercised by the ftiff Oppofition that is made to it ; What, though He has the farther Mortification to find every Effort, that He makes in its Defence, either fall to the Ground, or, which is worfe, thrown back with Refentment and Difdain upon His Hands, Will no Good *whatfoever* arife from Thence ? Can the *generous* Labour be abfolutely loft ? If fo to *Others* ; not furely to Himfelf.

HE has, at leaft, that *inward* Peace and Satisfaction of having done what is right, and this pleafing Confciousnefs of His Own Integrity, *crowned* with deferved Approbation from a higher Quarter.

WHEN I confider Our Antediluvian Prophet in this Situation, Methinks I fee Him fupporting Himfelf upon the fame Principles with the *beft* and *greateft* Reformer that God ever fent into the World ; for, though His Miniftry was accompanied with fo fmall Succefs amongst His Countrymen the *Jews*, That, with Refpect to

SERM. Them, He might cry out, *I have laboured*  
 XI. *in vain, and spent my Strength for Nought;*  
 yet He subjoins, for His Own Relief,  
*surely My Judgment is with the Lord, and*  
*My Reward with My God.* On the Other  
 Hand, would We see, How poor and  
 low are Those Motives and Inducements,  
 for the Sake of which Men so often step  
 over the Commands of God, We need  
 only bring Them to the Light of the  
 Text.

HAD We been present at the Flood,  
 and could We be supposed to speak of  
 those Antient Times in the Modern Phrase,  
 should We not have cried out, What a-  
 vails it now to have raised great Estates,  
 and added Land to Land by any unright-  
 eous and sinister Measures?

WHAT is become of those sumptuous  
 Piles of Buildings whose Foundations were  
 laid in Fraud or Rapine, and Their Ma-  
 terials procured at the Expence of Orphans  
 Cries or injured Widows Tears? Or, Where  
 now is that far greater Pile and Structure of  
 Human Power which the Grand Monarchs  
 and *Nimrods* of the Age have raised upon  
 the Violation of Treaties, upon the unne-  
 cessary



cessary Invasion of Their Neighbours, and whole Seas of Blood *wantonly* spilt in Gratification of Their restless Ambition, Their Discontent with Their present Portion, and most exorbitant Desire of More? Alas! Their Crowns and Scepters are now not to be found, but All ‘*with All Their Pomp, deep under Water rolled, and in Their Palaces, where Luxury late reigned, Sea-Monsters whelp and stable.*’

IN the Midst of this universal Havock, I had almost overlooked the Sins of Intemperance and Pleasures of Debauch, or Those soft Passions and Scenes of Dalliances, in which an Age (wholly immersed in Matter) placed its Happiness, providing only for Animal Enjoyment, and overlooking its highest Good. Nor should We dissemble, Here, the Folly of opposing the *first* Glimpse or Appearance of Truth on the One Hand, and of supporting Error upon Human Authority or Public Example and Popular Custom on the Other.

LET but a *Divine* Interposure be supposed, it alike cancels the Acts of Councils, and those Imperial Edicts by which

SERM. They were enforced. Nor can We turn

XI. Our Eyes upon the *Ark*, without plainly  
 inferring (as I observed in My former Discourse) That Truth is Something not depending upon Human Will or Fancy.

It is, like God Himself, *invariably* the Same; whether it has a Whole World of Admirers, or is banished from Society, and obliged to shelter itself in a single Vessel.

Thus, if we consider the then present Age, as *Part* of the Human Species, We shall have this Good, at least, arising out of their Punishment, That it affords an awful Admonition to After-Times. And, if the Human Race be considered as Part of the *whole* intellectual System, the Same Event might be attended with a greater and still more diffusive Good.

Here was a Sight by which an Angel might improve, to find God introducing a *New Set* of Actors upon the Stage of Life, when the Old were become so corrupt, that there was no Hopes of Their being reformed.

I AM loth to dismiss the Subject without observing, That, perhaps, that *very*  
 Circum-

Circumstance, which has been thought a Blemish in the Divine Scheme, has its Use; and an Use of the same excellent Kind with the other Parts. It must be confessed to be a very moving Circumstance to find such a Number of poor *innocent* Babes, and who had done Nothing to forfeit Life, involved in the general Calamity.

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XI.

BUT, the Fact being supposed, What Reflexions would good Sense, and Reason, and Natural Religion oblige Us to make upon it? A *judicious Deist* who considers, That Nature is only *Another* Term for the Effect or Workmanship of the God of Nature, and who considers, How, in Virtue of the present Constitution of Human Nature, many Thousands of Our Infants are in every Age hurried into Eternity, within the Space of a few Months or Days, in different Parts of the Earth, will not make *This* Circumstance (how deplorable soever) any Objection against the *Mosaic* Account of the Flood.

If this Circumstance be any Objection at all against the Divine Administration, it is an Objection not *peculiar* to Revelation,



SERM. tion, but in Common to *All* Religion,  
 XI. whether Natural or Revealed.

AND therefore, if this Constitution of Things cannot be supported, it follows, not That Revealed Religion must be given up into the Hands of the *Deist*, but *Deism* itself (and with That All Religion) into the Hands of the *Atheist*. What then shall We say to these Things? Not, surely, That God punishes One Set of Beings for the Crimes committed by Another; for How should *the Judge of the whole Earth do Wrong*? Much less, That God inflicts Pains or Misery without a *sufficient* Reason, and where he has not much greater and more valuable Ends to answer, than the Ease of the Subject by whom They are felt. Our Revelation itself precludes all such unrighteous Suspicions of Deity, it does so in many Places, but especially by That Reflexion which it puts into the Mouth of God upon a similar Occasion; for, after the *Ninevites* had repented, and by That Repentance removed the Ground and Reason of those National Judgments which otherwise God threatened to let loose upon Them, God  
 inforces

inforces His Resolution to shew Them Mercy, by the Consideration of the great Number of Infants that were amongst Them : *Should I not spare Nineveh, that great City, wherein are more than Threescore Thousand Persons, that cannot discern between the Right Hand and the Left.* Let the National Chastisement be either a Pestilence, or Foreign Invasion, in either Case these Members of the Community (how pure and innocent soever) must of Necessity bear Their Part in the *Public* Calamity.

PERHAPS, it will be said, That the general Advantages, which grow out of that mutual Dependence and Connexion of Interests, that belong to Society, are so great as to counter-balance some Inconveniencies which, at *particular* Times, may arise from Thence.

IF not, I see Nothing left Us, but One of these Two Reflexions, Either of which have their Use : Either, first, That it is better to have a Period put to the Existence of the Moral Agent than have it continued with the Loss of Virtue. Or, if This is not thought sufficient to vindicate the Di-

SERM. vine Proceedings, then there *must* be some

XI. After-State of Existence.

SHOULD We take this Scripture-Fact on the former Foot, it points out the Importance of the Moral Good, which alone is absolutely such. If the Latter must be called in, We have still, in this Scripture-Fact, a *New Memorial* of the future State, which (besides the Improvement it gives to the Cause of Virtue in General) obviates all Surmises of any Wrong done to the Parties concerned in the present Case, and leaves Room to infer, How this Remove might be greatly to Their Advantage: If it was an Advantage to have these tender Plants, this young Nursery taken, if I may so say, out of a *Soil*, grown so corrupt, that there was the highest Danger of Their *degenerating* from Their *Native* Quality, and becoming, with Time, the most rank and noxious Weeds, and to have Them transplanted into the true Garden, and *Paradise* of God.

SUCH is the noble *Moral* couched under this Scripture-History. In whatever Aspect it is surveyed, it points out the  
Moral



Moral Good, and that Invisibile Power SERM.  
 which is engaged for its Support. If so, XI.  
 it remains for Us to treat the Affair, not  
 as indifferent By-standers, but in a Sense as  
 Parties concerned. ‘ Happy is the Man  
 ‘ (says the *Roman Poet*) that takes Caution  
 ‘ by Another’s Danger!’ This Observa-  
 tion carries its own Evidence along with  
 it, and is too well connected with the  
 Notion of Interest, to require any farther  
 Inforcement. Otherwise I might have  
 backed it with a certain Cotemporary of  
 His, whose Judgment might come with  
 more Weight upon Us. Our Lord (after  
 having observed, That *the Day of Judg-*  
*ment* was One of those important Times  
 and Seasons which *the Father has* reserved  
 in *His Own* Breast, and which, as yet, was  
 a Secret to Every One, but God Himself)  
 draws a Comparison between the Two  
 Dispensations, I mean That of *Noah* and  
 His Own.

*AS the Days of Noah were, so also shall*  
*the Coming of the Son of Man be. For as*  
*in the Days of Noah, that were before the*  
*Flood, They were eating and drinking, mar-*  
*rying and giving in Marriage, i. e. Whol-*  
 ly

SERM. ly immersed in Sensuality, and abandoning

XI. Themselves to mere Animal Enjoyments

and the Affairs of Life, without giving Themselves the least Thought or Concern about those Judgments which hung over Their Heads, *till the Day that Noah entered into the Ark, and the Flood came, and took them All away; so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. Watch Ye therefore, for Ye know not in what Hour Your Lord cometh.* Our Lord sets before Us this antient History, as a Kind of *Moral* Piece or Painting, in which More is intended than described; it conveys an useful Lesson to Us. He would have Us learn Something from it: Learn to be truly wise, and not to act over-again a Folly which has been so severely chastised in former Times.

If, therefore, We would have Our Minds to be well impressed, We need only to make the Antediluvian Case Our Own. Had We been alive, and present in That Age of the World, when God partly by the Voice of Nature, and partly by Revelation, admonished Mankind of their sinful Courses: Had We been placed in  
such

such a Situation, What Part could We SERM. with to have acted? Would it have been XI. either wise, or safe, to trifle with the Divine Reproof, and, instead of giving it a due Consideration, like *Noah's* Contemporaries, throw it off with an Air of Indifference? Sure, no Man, in the Use of Reason, would justify so wild a Conduct. If He should, Does not the Event confute Him? Let but the Winding up of Affairs be well considered, and He will see immediately the Folly of Resisting Truth in *whatever* Form She presents Herself to Us.

GOD, that He might let Us see, How determined He is to support the Cause of Virtue, has already set so *dreadful* an Example before Our Eyes. But, Alas! if Sinners of After-Times will not be affected with so solemn a Warning, What will move Them? Are We come to That Pass, that Nothing short of *Our Own* Personal Experience will do it? Must the *Windows of Heaven*, again, *be opened*? Must the *Fountains of the great Deep*, again, *be broken up*? Or, if this Kind of Punishment be precluded, Do We wait for *Another*, before



SERM. fore We admit a ferious Sense of the  
XI. Evil of Sin? How much wiser for Us to  
learn Our Duty in a *milder* Way, and  
be reclaimed upon cheaper Terms.

*NOW to Him that is able to keep You  
from falling, &c.*

SERM.

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## S E R M O N XII.

The Case of *Abraham's* Offering  
up His Son examined.

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GENESIS xxii. 12.

*And He said, Lay not Thy Hand  
upon the Lad, neither do Thou  
any Thing unto Him ; for now  
I know, that Thou fearest God,  
seeing Thou hast not with-held  
Thy Son, Thy Only Son, from  
Me.*

**A**MONGST the several Con-  
siderations that have a Tendency  
to enlarge Our Charity to-  
ward Persons of a different Sentiment from  
Ourselves, This is One, That the very  
Objections, which have been raised against  
a Scripture-Fact or Doctrine, are fre-  
quently

SERM.  
XII.

SERM. quently such as an honest and impartial  
 XII. Mind would naturally suggest. I could  
 produce many an Instance of this Kind;  
 but none, I think, more plain and palpa-  
 ble, than with Reference to the Case be-  
 fore Us.

THE Fact, under Consideration, is that  
 of *Abraham's* attempting to offer up His  
 Son, in Obedience to a Divine Command.  
 And now, Whether this Fact had been  
 related by *Moses*, *Herodotus*, or any other  
 Historian, whether Antient or Modern,  
 the first Query, that would occur to a  
 considerate Reader, is, Whether the Fact  
 itself be of such a Kind, as implies no  
 Contradiction to the Reason of Things to  
 suppose it true; for, if it does, it carries  
 its own immediate Refutation along with  
 it, and, as such, may fairly be exploded,  
 without giving Ourselves any farther  
 Trouble to enquire into the Historic  
 Proof; no Historic Proof, or Evidence,  
 whatever, being able to support a Fact of  
 such a Kind, as implies a Contradiction to  
 suppose it true.

ACCORDINGLY, the most judicious  
 Opposers of this Branch of the Scripture-  
 History



History have taken This very Method ; SERM.  
They have examined the Nature of the XII.  
Fact itself, and have endeavoured from  
Thence to prove, That some Contradiction would follow, should We suppose it true. And, since This, indeed, is the main Hinge, on which the Controversy turns, I will consider this Part of the Argument at Large, I mean, Whether, supposing this Fact, as Our Historian relates it, for true, any Contradiction will follow from it?

A FRIEND of Truth would not willingly violate the Law of Truth, in any Form ; and therefore, laying aside all Partiality in Favour of the *Jewish* Historian, or Prejudice against Him, let Us with all possible Care and Integrity examine this Fact, as related by Him.

To a Mind, so situated, it will easily appear, That, should the Command, which God gave to *Abraham* to offer up His Son, *imply His* \* *Putting* Him to Death, still God never intended, that this Part of the Command should be put in

\* Which yet lies on the Opposers of Revelation to prove.

SERM. Execution, but reserved to Himself the  
 XII. Liberty of Preventing it by a Counter-  
 Order, when the End, proposed by giving the Command, was secured.

OUR Historian suggests as much in the Introduction: *And it came to pass after these Things, that God tempted Abraham; or, as it might have been rendered, made Trial of Him; and, to shew, What Kind of Trial was intended, it is subjoined, that God said to Him as follows, Take now Thy Son, Thy Only Son (for He had but One by Sarah, but One in whom the Promise, relating to His Seed, should be fulfilled) Thy Son whom Thou lovest, and go to the Land of Moriah, and offer Him there for a Burnt-Offering upon One of the Mountains, which I will shew unto Thee. And That God intended no more, than to put His Faith and Resignation to the Trial, appears from hence, That, after Abraham had approved the Same, God not only put a Stop to any further Execution of the Command, but, withal, assigns this Reason for it: Lay not Thy Hand upon the Youth, for now I know, that Thou fearest God, and hast not with-held Thy Son, Thy Only*

*Only Son, from Me* ; plainly intimating, SERM.  
XII.  
That, should the Command have imported the Putting His Son to Death, still God would not have Him proceed in the Execution of it, because He had already obtained the End proposed by it, which was not the Death of *Isaac*, but only to draw from *Abraham* this Proof of His Faith and Resignation to the Will of God.

ON the Other Hand it should be confessed, That no Principle or Intention, how sincere soever in itself, will justify an Act, in its own Nature, wrong ; and endless Mischiefs will arise to Society, should this Maxim be received, That Our Zeal for God will bear Us out in violating the Rule of Right between Man and Man ; and therefore I must frankly own, That, if so immoral a Principle as This can be fairly deduced from the Scripture-History, the Latter must in Reason be given up ; for We can never be so well assured of the Truth of any Historic Account whatever, as We are already assured, That Nothing should be received under Covert of Revelation, which contradicts the Moral Fitness and Reason of Things.



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VOL. I.

Q

BUT

SERM. [BUT the Supposal of a Contradiction  
 XII. is One Thing, and the Reality Another ;  
 and therefore, without suffering Ourselves  
 to be amused with the bare Sound of  
 Words, let Us carefully examine this Scrip-  
 ture-History, with the several Objections  
 that have been raised against it.]

THE *Two* Main Solutions of this Scrip-  
 ture-Difficulty proceed upon a widely-  
 different Foot ; the *One* supposing the  
 Thing commanded to be Morally unfit ;  
 the *Other*, That an Act of Obedience, so  
 circumstanced, was consistent with Mo-  
 rality.

THE Author of a Tract, intituled, *The  
 Case of Abraham, &c.* has espoused the  
 First of these Principles ; His Words are  
 These, ‘ As to the Case of *Abraham*, I  
 ‘ think, *That the Thing Commanded* was  
 ‘ Morally unfit, and that God gave the  
 ‘ Command, not with Intent, That it  
 ‘ should be obeyed, but That He might  
 ‘ take Occasion from it, to shew to *A-*  
 ‘ *braham*, and all His Posterity, the Un-  
 ‘ fitness of all Human Sacrifices ; and  
 ‘ That This was the Case, I think, is evi-  
 ‘ dent from the Event ; for, as the Com-  
 ‘ mand



‘mand was given to be a Trial of His SERM.  
 ‘Integrity, so, when that End was an- XII.  
 ‘swered, and *Abraham* had shewn a sted-  
 ‘dy Resolution, that He would deny  
 ‘Himself in so signal an Instance, to do  
 ‘what He judged to be His Duty, then  
 ‘God recalled the Command, and here-  
 ‘by testified His Dislike, and shewed the  
 ‘Unfitness of all such Practices.’

THIS State of the Case, without all Dispute, is so far just, as it relates to the End proposed, I mean, to draw from *Abraham* this Proof of His Obedience; nor is it at all improbable, as this worthy Author observes, That God, by the Counter-Order, might intend to express his Disapprobation of Human Sacrifices. But, after All, as He supposes the Thing commanded to be Morally unfit, I am much surprized, that a Man of his good Sense and Penetration should not see the Inconsistency of this Supposition, with What Himself advances in another Place, for He observes, That ‘*Abraham* could not, upon this Foot, have any rational Satisfaction that the aforesaid Command was Divine; because the Moral Unfitness of

SERM. ' the Action was a stronger Reason against  
XII. ' the Divinity of the Command, than A-

ny of those extraordinary Ways, in  
which the Command might be con-  
veyed to Him, could possibly be for it.  
From this Hypothesis, therefore, these Two  
Inconveniencies will follow, *first*, That  
God should put the Obedience of *Abraham*  
to the Trial, by giving Him a Command,  
without a sufficient Evidence of its be-  
ing from Himself, *i. e.* a Command which  
ought rather to have been disputed, than  
obeyed. And, *secondly*, By God's putting  
Him upon doing a Thing in its own Na-  
ture wrong, He has given Us a Specimen  
of His Piety at the Expence of His Vir-  
tue.

If, therefore, such Difficulties accom-  
pany the *first* Solution, let Us proceed to  
examine the *second*; I mean, That an  
Act, so circumstanced as this of *Abraham*,  
was consistent with Morality.

AND Here I would observe, *in the first*  
*Place*, That, how true soever it is, That  
no Violation of what is just and right can  
be defended under any Government, whe-  
ther Divine or Human, because the Obliga-  
tion

gation of Justice is absolutely and immu- SERM.  
tably the same : Yet there is no such abso- XII.  
lute Obligation with Regard to such Things, as Life and Property. On the Contrary, the Obligation to preserve These admits of certain Restrictions or Limitations, and consequently it is an Obligation, that either takes Place, or not, according to the Circumstance of the Case, to which it is applied. Otherwise, in Human Governments, the Rule of Right would be violated, as often as Public Justice is administered upon Capital Offenders ; and, in the Divine Government, the Supreme Lord and Disposer of all Things would have no Right to remove Any One out of Life at all, tho' intending that He should be no Sufferer by that Remove, but on the Contrary, that it should greatly redound to his Advantage.

BUT, in Reality, there is no such absolute Obligation, with Regard to Life ; and therefore, I should think, it cannot be a Query with any wise or considerate Man, Whether the Supreme Governor and Disposer of all Things may either continue Us in the present State, or re-  
Q 3 move



SERM. move Us into some Other State, at what  
 XII. Time, He Himself thinks fit and proper.  
 { Here is no Wrong done to the Party concerned ; Here is no Moral Obligation dispensed with at all, should the Party concerned be supposed compleatly innocent ; much less, should He have sinned, and so sinned, as to have deserved either This, or a greater Degree of Suffering, at the Hand of God. But a Suffering, capable of being counter-ballanced by a greater Good, is One Thing, and a Suffering, influenced by Way of *Punishment*, is Another ; and as God may have *Other* Ends to answer, by removing any One out of Life, than That of Punishment, it follows, That He can remove the most innocent Person, without dispensing with the Obligation of Justice, or without incurring the Charge of confounding the Innocent and the Guilty.

AND if God may, without any Violation of Right, remove the Person supposed into some other State of Existence, at what Time He thinks proper, He may also do it, in *what Way* Himself thinks fit and proper ; I mean, either by an immediate  
 Act

*Offering up His Son, &c.*

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Act of His Own Power, or by the Instrumentality of some Other Being, visible or invisible, acting by Commission from Him. SERM.  
XII.

Upon either Supposition, the Morality of the Act, on God's Part, continues the same; and so it does, with Regard to the subordinate Agent, or Instrument, who is no longer to be considered, as a separate independent Agent, for, as such, He may, indeed, have no Right over Another's Life; but, as an Agent commissioned by God, and, as such, invested with so much of God's Authority, that, in Strictness of Speech, it is not the subordinate Agent, or Instrument, but *God* by *Him*, that disposes of the Other's Life.

BUT, since this Part of the Subject, which relates to the subordinate Agency, contains the greatest Difficulty, let Us, in order to throw some further Light upon it, proceed to the *second* Proposition.

How true soever it is, That no Authority, whether Divine or Human, can dispense with the Moral Fitness and Reason of Things, yet, under all Government, whether Divine or Human, new Duties will arise out of new Circumstances or

SERM. Relations; and, consequently, That external Act, which could not with Reason have been done by a Person, under One Circumstance, or Relation, both may and ought to be done by Him under Another.

I TAKE this Proposition, in Conjunction with the Former, to contain the true Solution of This Scripture-Difficulty, so far as the Moral Obligation is concerned; and, therefore, carrying Both in View, I must bespeak Your Attention to What I have still further to offer, in Support of Them.

HAD it been a Duty of Morality to preserve Another's Life, absolutely and in all possible Circumstances or Relations, then would this Duty of Morality be set aside, as often as Public Justice is administered upon Capital Offenders. But, in Truth, There is no such Liberty taken with Moral Duty upon these Occasions, because there is no such absolute Obligation, with Respect to Life; and All Men know, That, how Morally unfit soever it would be for a Judge, Magistrate, or Executioner, to take away Life upon Another Occasion;



Occasion ; not so, when acting in Virtue SERM.  
of His Office, and with Commission from XII.  
the Powers that be. The Two Acts, so  
far as They relate to Life, may be the  
Same, but They are really different in  
Kind, or Nature ; the Idea of a proper  
Authority being wanting in the One ; not  
so, by Supposition, in the Other.

SHOULD the Sons of *Brutus*, for Instance, by some Act of Treason, or Conspiracy against the State, have forfeited Their Lives to the Community, I do not see, How *Brutus*, considered as a *Parent*, could with Reason have taken away their Lives, upon that Account ; because, as a *Parent*, He had no Right over Life. But no sooner is the same Person considered, as the Supreme Magistrate of *Rome*, and invested with Power to dispose of Life for the Public Good, *i. e.* No sooner is a new Relation introduced, but a new Duty arises from it ; it was in this new Capacity, that *Brutus* did well to pronounce Sentence of Death upon His Own Children, and that very Conduct is applauded in the Consul, which would have been condemned in the Father.

I AM

SERM. I AM sensible, This Simile does not,  
 XII. in some Respects, agree with the Case  
 of *Abraham*; because the Idea of *Punish-*  
*ment* is supposed in the One, which is not  
 suggested or implied in the Other. But,  
 surely, as the Governor of the World  
 may have *Other* Ends to answer by re-  
 moving any One out of Life, besides That  
 of Punishment; and, as there is no possi-  
 ble Inconvenience, which the best Man  
 under Heaven may sustain by that Re-  
 move, but which the Governor of the  
 World is able to ballance, a Command  
 from God, to this Effect, would be a  
 sufficient Ground of Action. Nor would  
 it follow, That the Person, who puts  
 this Command in Execution, dispenses  
 with a Moral Obligation; because there  
 is no such Duty of Morality, as obliges  
 Him absolutely, and in all possible Cir-  
 cumstances, to refrain from taking away  
 Another's Life, and not in This among the  
 Rest, where the Governor of the Universe  
 requires that Life at His Hands. Let  
 the true Notion of Moral Duty be fair-  
 ly stated, and Our Difficulty, so far as the  
 Moral Fitness is concerned, is at an End;  
 but

but if, instead of This, We set out with SERM.  
 some partial and imperfect Notion of the XII.  
 Moral Law, the more justly We reason  
 upon this mistaken Principle, the more  
 We are misled. Had the above-cited  
 worthy Writer duly considered This,  
 surely He would not have amused His  
 Readers with this Remark, 'That a Di-  
 vine Command can never cancel the  
 Natural Obligation, which a Parent is  
 under to protect the Life of His Child.'  
 Allowed it cannot—If the Natural Ob-  
 ligation be fairly stated and explained, I  
 mean as it implies an Obligation upon a  
 reasonable Nature, and consequently an  
 Obligation, that admits of such *Restric-*  
*tions*, or Limitations, as right Reason pre-  
 scribes.

THIS Author Himself has expressly  
 mentioned One, *viz.* 'In that Case, where  
 the Life of the Child is forfeited to the  
 Community;' and I wonder that the  
 same good Sense should not have supplied  
 Him with Another, I mean, where the  
 Supreme Lord and Disposer of All Things  
 has so constituted Things, that every In-  
 terest, whether Private or Public, is best  
 answered



SERM. answered by resigning that Life into *His*  
 XII. Hands, especially when He subjoins, ' Or  
 { ' any other Way renders it fit He should  
 ' die.' Again, it is a just Principle which  
 He advances, ' That to take away a Life  
 ' causelessly is Morally unfit.' But, surely,  
 to take away Life in Obedience to a  
 Divine Command, *so* circumstanced, is  
 not to do it without a sufficient Cause.  
 And to add, ' That, by so doing, We  
 ' debar the Subject from the Enjoyment  
 ' of Life,' is to forget, That there is no  
 possible Inconvenience, which the Subject  
 can sustain by the Execution of This Com-  
 mand, but which the Governor of the U-  
 niverse is able to ballance, and, had in this  
 very Case, engaged to ballance. And when  
 He puts that Question, ' Whether it be  
 ' right or fit, in the Nature of Things,  
 ' for God, from mere Sovereign Pleasure,  
 ' to cut off a Creature in the Midst of  
 ' His Days?' I answer, By no Means, if,  
 by mere Sovereign Pleasure, is meant a  
 Will or Pleasure destitute of Reason; but,  
 as God acts Nothing by such a Pleasure  
 as This, so, upon Supposition the Di-  
 vine Command was made known to *A-*  
*brahim,*

*brabam*, He ought in Reason to believe, That God had His Reasons for it, though He should not think fit to communicate those Reasons to Him. Upon the Whole, as I am speaking to the Subjects of God, I must insist on it, That We ought in Justice to God Himself, and in Obedience to the Religion of Nature, to consider, How great a Change a Command from God makes in the State of Things. We should consider, when reasoning on the present Fact, That it is by Supposition the Command of that Being, who is the Supreme Lord and Disposer of All Things, who can, without any Violation of the Rule of Right, remove the most innocent Person into some other State of Existence, at what Time, and by what Instrument Himself thinks fit and proper; it is the Command of that Being, who can sufficiently ballance any Inconveniencies which may be sustained at present by the Execution of it; nay, more, and, if He thinks fit, can counter-act any After-Abuse which might be made of it; in a Word, it is the Command of that Being, of whom it both may, and ought to be believed, That  
He

SERM. He has the wisest Reasons for Whatever

XII. He commands, whether He does, or does not, think fit to communicate His Reasons to Us. *He does according to His Will amongst the Armies of Heaven, and Inhabitants of Earth, neither is there Any that can stay His Hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?*

HAVING examined That Objection which relates to the Moral Fitness, on which, indeed, the main Hinge of the Controversy turns, We will proceed to examine some other Objections, which have their Weight, though not of equal Consequence with the Former.

SHOULD it, for Instance, be objected, That it is unworthy of God to give a Command, when He intends by a Counter-order to prevent the Execution. Allowed—In all such Instances, where no good and valuable End is proposed by giving the Command; not so, in that Case, where there is.

I MIGHT illustrate This by a familiar Example in Common Life. Should a General command His Troops to march and attack such a Place, suppose with Design  
to



to amuse the Enemy, and, when that SERM.  
End is gained, by a Counter-order oblige XII.  
Them to wheel off another Way, Who  
does not see, That there is Nothing unrea-  
sonable in a Command so circumstanced  
as This, though it should be afterwards  
reversed, because a good and valuable  
End is proposed by it?

AGAIN, it may be objected; That  
this Piece of History gives Encourage-  
ment to Human Sacrifices. To This I  
answer, That a bare Pretension is One  
Thing, and a just Deduction is Another;  
nor shall We be able to defend any Con-  
stitution, even in Natural Religion, if  
that Constitution is responsible for every  
Abuse, that may be made of it. Upon  
this Foot, Our Moral Agency, though  
the best and greatest of the Natural Gifts  
of God, may be set aside, since, if it  
were not for This, there could be no such  
Thing as Immorality in the World, and  
even *Atheism* itself may fetch, from Hence,  
a good Argument in its Behalf, since,  
if All Religion should be banished from  
Society, there would be no Room for  
false Religion under any Form, and, by  
parting

SERM. parting with the very Notion of God, We  
XII. should part with All that Enthusiasm and  
Superstition, which have been raised up-  
on it.

But after All, There is the less Room  
to fasten a Surmise of this Kind, upon  
this particular Transaction, as it appears  
from the History, That God never in-  
tended, that Part of the Command, which  
related to the Death of *Isaac*, should be  
put in Execution ; and, consequently,  
Whoever would support, from Hence,  
the Practice of Human Sacrifices, proceeds  
on too partial and imperfect a View of  
Things ; He argues from a Part of the  
History, when lopped off from the Whole,  
and makes a Handle of the bare Com-  
mand, without attending either to that  
particular View with which it was given,  
or (when that End was secured) to the  
Counter-order, by which its Execution  
was prevented. In short, the Argument  
will amount to This, That Mankind will  
have a just Pretext, for supposing Hu-  
man Sacrifices acceptable to God, from a  
History, in which it appears, that no such  
Sacrifice was intended by Him, but on  
the

the Contrary, Another substituted in its Room. SERM.  
XII.

MAY I not venture to affirm still further, That, had *Abraham* been permitted to put His Son to Death, in Consequence of a Divine Command, it will not follow, That Either *Abraham* Himself, or any Other Parent, might do the Same, without a Divine Command; because the Acts are essentially different, as different as the Ideas of Authority and no Authority; and, consequently, the One cannot with Reason be inferred from the Other; and since, in All Reasoning upon Facts every Circumstance, belonging to Them, should be taken in, We might add to all the Rest, That this very Subject, being a Person sent into the World, out of the ordinary Course of Things, and God's having laid Himself under as extraordinary an Obligation for the Continuance, or at least the Restoration of His Life, &c. appear wisely calculated to prevent Our Forming so *exempt* a Case into a Precedent for Common Life.

UPON the Whole, This Branch of the Scripture-History is no further concerned, than as the *Enthusiast* may endeavour to



SERM. screen Himself under it. And in Justice to

XII.

it—I will venture to say, It is so far from supporting His Pretension, That on the Contrary it may be turned against Him; for not to observe again, That God, to preclude all Surmise, as though He would disturb the Obligation grounded in the ordinary Course of Things, fastens upon a quite different Subject, a Person sent into the World under Circumstances peculiar to Himself, Whoever would form the Fact in Debate into a Precedent for Common Life, must be a Person that has never heard, How God, by a Counter-Order, prevented the Execution of this Command in the Case of *Abraham*, and did as expressly forbid any Thing like it, to His Posterity; Two Considerations, which sufficiently preclude any such Misconstruction being put upon this Affair, by the Friends of Revelation, who yet are the only Persons in Danger of being influenced by it.

S E R M.

## S E R M O N XIII.

The Case of *Abraham's* Offering  
up His Son examined.

GENESIS xxii. 15, 16, 17, 18.

*And the Angel of the Lord called  
unto Abraham out of Heaven the  
second Time, and said, By My-  
self have I sworn, says the Lord,  
for, because Thou hast done this  
Thing, and hast not with-held Thy  
Son, Thine only Son; That in blef-  
sing I will blefs Thee, and in mul-  
tiplying I will multiply Thy Seed,  
as the Stars of the Heaven -----  
and Thy Seed shall possess the Gate  
of His Enemies, and in Thy Seed  
shall All Nations of the Earth be*

R 2                    *blest,*

*The Case of Abraham's  
blessed, because Thou hast obeyed  
My Voice.*

SERM.  
XIII.

A FRIEND of Truth would not only be ambitious to advance What is just and true, but also to set the Truth in that Point of View, in which it will be most clearly discerned, and is most likely to secure a fair and rational Admission into the Minds of Men. Upon this Principle, I must resume that Maxim, which of all Others has been thought most to militate against this Branch of the Scripture-History; I mean, That the Moral Fitness is Something not dependent on Authority, or Will, but such as grows out of the very State, Circumstance, or Relation, in which the Agent is placed. And I would do so with this double View, *first*, That the Persons, who reject this Branch of the Scripture-History, as supposing it inconsistent with Natural Religion, may perceive We have the same generous Concern with Them, for the Religion of Nature; nor do We propose any other Defence of Scripture, than What appears to Us perfectly consistent with it; and, *secondly*,



*secondly*, to point out where the chief SERM.  
XIII.  
Pinch or Difficulty lies; not so much in the Historic Testimony, considered apart from the Nature of the Fact, against which I find Little or Nothing offered, but in the Credibility or Nature of the Fact itself. For since All Men must allow, It would have been Morally unfit for *Abraham* to have made this Attempt upon the Life of His Son, without a Command from God, it may with Reason be enquired, How a Command from God, supposing it true, could make it cease to be so; and yet that Original Maxim remain undisturbed, That the Moral Fitness is Something not dependent on Authority, or Will, but such as grows out of the very State, Circumstance, or Relation, in which the Moral Agent is placed.

A WRITER of the last Age, who was a far better Performer in the Poetic than the Moral Kind, puts the following Question: ' Could a pious Man dispense with the Command of *Jupiter*, to comply with the Obligations of Gratitude? Religion, as He goes on to observe, must have Moral Honesty for its Ground-Work, or We shall be apt to suspect

SERM. ' its Truth, but an immediate Revela-

XIII. ' tion dispenses with all the Duties of

~ ' Morality.' But, surely, this ingenious Writer did not perceive, That His Reasoning is of such a Kind, as overthrows itself; for, if Religion must have Moral Honesty for its Ground - Work, a Religion, which dispenses with All the Duties of Morality, is a Religion destitute of its proper Ground - Work, *i. e.* a Religion which cannot stand. For which Reason, I am so far from thinking with this Author, That a true Revelation can dispense with All the Duties of Morality, that I dare not assert, It can dispense with One. And, should His Question be considered in this View, I mean, ' Whether ' a pious Man can dispense with the Command of *Jupiter*, to comply with the Obligations of Gratitude ?' I answer, Yes, surely, he may, and ought to dispense with the Command in that Case, where the Command, by Supposition, dispenses with the Moral Duty, and, by so doing, dispenses with Something that is of equal Obligation with the Authority of *Jupiter* Himself. Will the Command of any Being, whether in Heaven above, or in Earth below, make

an Act of Fraud, Treachery, or Ingratitude, SERM.  
become a Virtue, or even a Matter of XIII.  
Indifference? Or, to instance in that very  
Case which this Author subjoins, I mean,  
the Loan which the *Israelites* are supposed to have taken, by God's Command, upon Their Departure out of *Egypt*; for, if to borrow from the *Nature* of the Thing, implies an Obligation to repay, I fear it will then follow, That either This antient Fact is misunderstood, or That it is absolutely undefensibile; because, how true soever it is, That the Supreme Owner and Disposer of All Things can transfer What was the Property of One Man, to Another, yet surely it is beyond the Power of God Himself to make an Act of Fraud, and Treachery, become an indifferent Thing; nor can We, in Justice to *the God of Truth*, presume, that He should commission any Being to borrow upon so unreasonable a Foot, as this Author imagines, I mean, without the Intention to repay. And, by Parity of Argument, if to punish the Innocent be absolutely unjust, it will then follow, That no Command, or Authority, whether Divine or Human, could warrant the Same; and,



SERM. consequently, Had God, with Reverence  
 XIII. be it spoken, commissioned *Abraham*, to  
 inflict the Suffering of Death, by Way of  
*Punishment*, upon *Isaac*, when *Isaac*, by  
 Supposition, had done Nothing worthy  
 of Punishment, the Act of *Abraham*,  
 so circumstanced, would not cease to be  
 unjust, for having the Divine Command  
 annexed to it, because no Authority can  
 dispense with the Obligation of Justice,  
 or make that Act, in any One given In-  
 stance, cease to be immoral, which, by  
 Supposition, is absolutely immoral under  
 All. But, in Truth, no such Absurdity  
 can be fastened on the Scripture-Historian,  
 as That *the Judge of the whole Earth*  
 should confound the *Innocent* with the  
*Guilty*, or, to croud One Indecency up-  
 on the Back of Another, choose a Parent  
 for His Executioner.

BUT since, in All Reasoning upon  
 Facts, We ought to argue not from a Part,  
 but the Whole, let Us, *in the first Place*,  
 review the Fact itself, as related by the  
 Historian; and then, *secondly*, by the Help  
 of This, give the Solution of the aforesaid  
 Query, How a Command, so circumstan-  
 ced, would justify the Conduct of *Abra-*  
*ham*,

*ham*, and yet the Original Maxim remain undisturbed, That the Moral Fitness is Something not dependent on Authority, or Will, but such as grows out of the very State, Circumstance, or Relation, in which the Moral Agent is placed. E R M.  
XIII.

To begin with the Fact itself,

IT appears from the whole Tenor of the History, That the Covenant, which God made with *Abraham*, and in which the most considerable Benefits were entailed upon His Posterity, was suspended on His Faith and Obedience.

THAT, during this Probationary State, in which the *Patriarch* was placed, He received the Command, to offer up His Son, a Son given Him under certain peculiar Circumstances, and with *This* among the Rest, That in this very Son His Seed should be called,----In other Words, That This was that Branch of the *Abrahamic* Family, on which the Benefits of the Covenant should be entailed. Accordingly *St. Paul*, when referring to that just Exercise of Reason, by which the *Patriarch* reconciled this seeming Contradiction of the Divine Revelations, tells Us, That He

SERM. He offered up His Son, not with Despair  
 XIII. of seeing His Face again; but on the  
 Contrary, as *accounting* or reasoning, that  
*God was able to raise Him from the Dead.*  
 He therefore resigned Him upon such  
 Terms, that *Isaac* must of Necessity have  
 been restored to Him again, if the Divine  
 Power and Veracity were a sufficient Security  
 for it: And so restored, that, from  
 the Tenor of the Covenant, the present  
 Ill would be amply compensated by the  
 Benefits entailed in Consequence of His  
 Obedience, not on *Isaac* alone, but on a  
 great and numerous Posterity that should  
 be descended from Him.

By the Help of these Remarks, which  
 are taken from the Nature of the Fact,  
 We may solve with Ease that Objection,  
 which so much embarrasses a good and  
 virtuous Mind; I mean, 'That, if it was  
 ' Morally unfit, in the *Nature* of the  
 ' Thing, for a Father to put a good and  
 ' dutiful Child to Death, a Command  
 ' from God cannot make it to be other-  
 ' wise; because no Command can make  
 ' That fit, which is, in the Nature of  
 ' Things, unfit.'

To



To which I answer, That if by the SERM.  
First of these Propositions, That it is Mo- XIII.  
rally unfit, in the Nature of Things, for  
a Father to put a good and dutiful Child  
to Death, is meant, That it is absolutely  
so, or unfit in *all* possible States, Circum-  
stances, or Relations, and consequently in  
This among the Rest, it will follow, in-  
deed, That a Divine Command can make  
no Alteration in the Case; but then Our  
Objector begs the Question; He takes for  
granted the very Thing which He has to  
prove against Us, I mean, That it is abso-  
lutely, and in all possible States, Circum-  
stances, or Relations, Morally unfit for a  
Father to put, &c.

BUT if, by the *aforesaid* Proposition, is  
meant, That it is Morally unfit for a Pa-  
rent to put a good and dutiful Child to  
Death, in the ordinary State of Things,  
or without a Divine Command; and from  
Hence it is inferred, That it would be al-  
so Morally unfit to put His Child to Death,  
with a Divine Command, because the  
Command of any Being cannot make That  
fit, which, in the Nature of Things, is  
unfit; To This I answer, That it is true,  
indeed,

SERM. indeed, That the Command of any Being  
 XIII. cannot make That fit, which at the same  
 { Time, or under the same Circumstances,  
 is unfit, because That were a Contradiction  
 in Terms ; but a Command or Constitution  
 from God can make such a Change in the  
 State, Circumstance, or Relation of Things  
 (on which the Moral Fitness of the Human  
 Conduct depends) as that it both may, and  
 will be Morally fit to do That in Consequence  
 of the Divine Command, which would not  
 have been fit to do without it.

It is a just Remark, That the Command  
 of any Being cannot make That fit which,  
 in the Nature of Things, is unfit ; for Truth  
 is not dependent on Will, nor is it in the  
 Power of God Himself to make a Thing to  
 be, at the same Time, Other, than What in  
 Reality it is ; but then, how justly soever  
 this Remark may be applied to all such  
 Cases, where the Moral Fitness, or Obligation,  
 is absolutely and immutably the same ; not  
 so, where the Obligation is such, as shall  
 either take Place, or not, according to the  
 State, Circumstance, or Relation, in which the  
 Moral

Moral Agent is placed. If, for Instance, SERM.  
to punish the Innocent be absolutely, and XIII.  
in all possible States and Circumstances, a  
Violation of Justice, it will then follow,  
That no Command or Authority, whether  
Divine or Human, could warrant the  
Same ; because the Obligation of Justice is  
absolutely and immutably the same, ex-  
tending to all possible States, Circumstan-  
ces, or Relations, in which the Moral A-  
gent is placed ; for which Reason, I must  
again frankly confess, That, had God  
(with Reverence be it spoken) commis-  
sioned *Abraham* to inflict the Suffering of  
Death, by Way of *Punishment*, on *Isaac*,  
when *Isaac*, by Supposition, had done No-  
thing worthy of Death, the Act of *Abra-*  
*ham*, so circumstanced, being, from the  
Nature of the Thing, a Violation of Jus-  
tice, would not cease to be unjust, for  
having the Circumstance of Command, or  
Authority, annexed to it ; because no Au-  
thority can dispense with the Obligation of  
Justice, which is absolutely and immuta-  
bly the same, or make that Act, in any  
One given Instance, cease to be immoral,  
which, by Supposition, is absolutely, and  
without



SERM. without Restriction, immoral under All;  
 XIII. but, in Truth, no such Absurdity can be  
 fastened on the Scripture-Historian, as That  
*the Judge of the Whole Earth* should confound the *Innocent* with the *Guilty*, or, to crowd One Indecency upon the Back of Another, choose a Parent for His Executioner. On the Contrary, I had almost said, That the least Degree of Attention to the Divine Command, as represented by Him, compared with the Nature of a Burnt-offering, is sufficient to preclude so ungenerous a Surmise; and therefore, to resume the Argument advanced in My *first* Discourse, I must add, That, how absolute and immutable soever is the Obligation of Justice, under all Government, whether Divine or Human, there is no such Obligation, with Regard to Life; and tho' *Abraham*, from the Parental Relation considered apart, was under a previous Obligation to preserve the Life of His Child, yet not by an Obligation of the same absolute Kind, with that of Justice, Goodness, or the Like; but on the Contrary such, as might be vacated by a Command from God, or rather by that  
 new

new State and Relation of Things, in SERM.  
which both the Parent and Child were XIII.

*now* placed, *i. e.* a State, in which the Parent best consults the Interest of His Child, by resigning Him to the Will of God; a State, I say, in which, considering the Connexion between the Obedience of the Parent and the Good entailed by it, upon His Off-spring, it appears, That *Abraham* acted the Part of a wise and considerate Man, who, instead of suffering His Passions to get the Ascendant over His Reason, subjected a lesser Good of His Child to a greater, and, by so doing, secured the Accomplishment of that Promise, in which not only the Good of *Isaac*, but also of a great Community, that should be descended from Him, was concerned.

*And the Angel of the Lord called a second Time out of Heaven, and said, By Myself have I sworn, says the Lord, because Thou hast done this Thing, and hast not withheld Thy Son, Thy Only Son, from Me; that in blessing I will bless Thee, and in multiplying I will multiply Thy Seed, as the Stars of the Heaven, and as the Sands upon the Sea-Shore, and Thy Seed shall possess the Gate*  
of

SERM. of His Enemies, and in Thy Seed shall All  
XIII. Nations of the Earth be blessed. So vain a

Thing it is to oppose a particular Relation to a Command or Constitution of God, when the Latter cannot only subject that particular Relation to the Public Good, but also provide for the Interest of that Relation itself, and Things may be so circumstanced, that the *Parent* shall not be lost in the Divine Commissioner, but on the Contrary, by one and the same Act, discharge aright the Duty, which he owes to God, and to His Seed, and take the most effectual Way to promote the Good of the *One*, by obeying the Command of the *Other*.

WE see from the Sequel of the History, How much Good resulted to Him and His, from His Obedience, so far as He was permitted to put the Command in Execution. The temporary Pangs, which either the Father or Son might endure from the Apprehension of Death, were abundantly compensated, as a late judicious Writer observes, ' by the unutterable  
' Transports of Joy, that must overflow the Hearts of Both, when He  
' found



‘ found His Beloved Child restored to SERM.  
 ‘ Him, and the Promises, relating to XIII.  
 ‘ His Seed, renewed in a more ample  
 ‘ and glorious Manner, than before.’----

And I may venture to assert still further, That, Had the *Patriarch* been permitted to put the Whole of the Command in Execution, it is no difficult Matter for a considerate Man to determine, How much Good might have resulted Both to Him and His, from that glorious Display of the Divine Power and Veracity, that must have ensued upon it, accompanied with a Proof, in Fact, of a future State, by the Resurrection of *Isaac* from the Dead : However, upon either Supposition, His Obedience entailed a Blessing upon His Off-spring, and considering the Tenure of the Covenant, by this Good Conduct of His, He assisted the Accomplishment of that Promise, in which His Own Interest and That of His Posterity were alike concerned. Tho’ after All, should any One not see into the Force of this Scripture-Argument, I think, He must admit This at least for true, That, supposing the Command from God, con-

SERM. *considering what Kind of Being it was, into*  
 XIII. *whose Hands the Patriarch transferred*  
 His Child, He might with Reason conclude, That the whole Transaction would redound to the Good of the Latter, especially when the Suffering, supposed, was not inflicted by Way of Punishment, and consequently, considering the Divine Goodness, must redound to the Advantage of the Sufferer.

THUS have I considered that Part of the Controversy, which relates to the Moral Fitness. I have shewn, That, supposing the Divine Command for true, it would imply no Contradiction to the Moral Fitness to put it in Execution, unless it be a Contradiction, for *Abraham* to acquit Himself well of Both Relations, and obey the Will of God, in an *Act* so circumstanced, that He was well assured, it would not turn up to the Detriment of His Child; Or rather, unless it be a Contradiction, to argue from the *Whole* Truth of the Case, instead of a Part, --- to resign a lesser Good of His Off-spring for a greater, and instead of opposing (in Our *partial*, disjointed View of Things) One Relation

lation to Another, most wisely to shape SERM.  
His Conduct by Both, and, in so do- XIII.  
ing, secure that Moral Grace and Fit-  
ness of Action, which is the Result of  
the Whole.

I would be ever desirous to wind up the most Controversial Discourses with some Practical Remark ; and, therefore, I shall conclude at present with This : That, as it is a vain Thing for a Parent, to imagine, He can promote the real Interest of His Off-spring, by stepping over the Commands of God for Their Sake: So, next to the great Duty of giving Our Children a good and virtuous Education, We cannot take a more effectual Step to entail God's Blessing upon Them, than by waving Our Regard to Their *supposed* Interest, in all such Instances, where it comes in Competition with the Cause of Truth, Piety, and Virtue. In this Way We acquire, I had almost said, a new Demand on the Divine Patronage and Care, both for Them and Us ; and, like *the Father of the Faithful*, transfer Our Joint-Interest into better Hands than Our Own.



SERM. Did He divest Himself of the Father;  
XIII. when resigning His Child at God's Com-  
mand? Did He act Aught inconsistent  
with that Testimony, which *The Search-  
er of Hearts* bore to His Parental Love  
and Tenderness? No—He only redu-  
ced that Passion under the Conduct of  
good Sense and Reason, and Natural Re-  
ligion; and, by so doing, He directed it  
into its proper Channel. And if We  
have, indeed, the like firm Belief of a  
Supreme Disposer, that has the Cause of  
Truth and Virtue at Heart, We should,  
like Him, determine, in all possible Cir-  
cumstances, in which We may be placed,  
most religiously to observe the Will of  
God; and should We, by so good a Re-  
solution, draw any present Inconvenience,  
or Suffering, upon Ourselves or Ours, We  
should, like Him, believe, That the All-  
wise, All-perfect Being both can, and  
will bring Good out of that very Evil;  
That He will, sooner or later, vindicate,  
to the Full, all these seeming Inequali-  
ties of Providence, and produce a Scene  
of Light and Glory out of the present  
Gloom.

FOR

*Offering up His Son, &c.*

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FOR *Light*, as We are informed, *shall* SERM.  
*arise to the Righteous out of Darknes*, and XIII.  
all the Ways or Dispensations of God will  
be found, in the End, to be *Mercy and*  
*Truth*, to Them that fear Him.

TO Him be Glory, &c.—

S 3

S E R M.

## S E R M O N XIV.

The Case of *Abraham's* Offering  
up His Son examined.

GEN. xxii. 2.

*And He said, Take now Thy Son,  
Thy only Son, whom Thou lovest,  
&c.*

SERM.  
XIV.

THE chief Strength of the Objections, that have been raised against This Branch of the Scripture-History, may be reduced under these Two Heads : *First*, That, should God in Reality have given this Command to *Abraham*, it would not have justified the Deed ; because the Thing commanded was Morally unfit ; or, *secondly*, should the Moral Fitness be secured, still it will  
be



be enquired, What *Proof* or Evidence *Abraham* could have of the Command being from God? I have already considered the *First* of these Objections; and shall lay out the present Discourse in Examining the *Second*. We ought in Reason to give every Objection its proper Weight, and therefore I must frankly confess, That this Query is too *material* to be overlooked. For, since it is allowed on all Sides, That it would have been Morally unfit for *Abraham*, to offer up His Son, without a Command from God, it follows, That *Abraham* might with Reason have expected a sufficient Proof or Evidence of the Command being from God; otherwise, this Conduct would be absolutely indefensible, should He have ventured upon such an Act on the bare *Presumption* of a Command from God, when, in Reality, He had no Proof or Evidence of its being from Him.

SERM.  
XIV.

It behoves Us to conceive of God, That He has a *Power* to make known His Will to other Beings, in such a Way, as shall produce a full Assurance, That the Command is from Him; He has so—

SERM. Whether He does, or does not, think fit  
XIV. to assign His Reasons for the Command

itself. And My Reason for this Assertion is This, because an Act of this Kind falls within the *Verge* of Power. In plain Terms, an Almighty Being can do every Thing, excepting That, which implies a Contradiction to be done; and, therefore, Whoever undertakes to prove, That God cannot communicate His Will, as above supposed, is obliged to point out that Contradiction; Otherwise, He begs the Question, and takes for granted the very Thing, which He has to prove.

AGAIN, I think any One, who seriously considers what *Kind* of Being God is, must allow, That a Command from Him, if *made known*, ought to be obeyed, though We should not perceive His Reasons for giving it. But now, if a Command from God, when *made known*, ought to be obeyed, though We should not perceive His Reasons for it, it necessarily follows, That God has some *other* Way to evidence His Command to Us, beside the Reason of the Thing; Otherwise,

Otherwise, this Absurdity will follow, SERM.  
That We should be obliged to obey a XIV.  
Command from God, without *any* Evi-  
dence of its being from Him.

I SHALL have Occasion, in the Sequel of this Discourse, to shew, That *Abraham* might see much further into the *Reason* of this particular Command, than is by Some imagined. But supposing the *Worst*, supposing Him a Stranger to the Reason of it, still I affirm, That God was able to *make known* His Will to Him, and with such an Evidence, as was sufficient to His Conviction, That the Command was in Truth from God. If any Man asserts the Contrary, I must remind Him of this self-evident Axiom, That an Almighty Being can do every Thing, excepting That which implies a Contradiction to be done ; and must ask again, What *Contradiction* is implied in an Act or Operation, as above supposed ?

IT is true, That God Himself must work upon every Subject, according to its proper Nature ; but, Is not Man a Being, from His very Nature capable, not only of  
discovering



SERM. discovering Truth by Himself, but also of  
 XIV. *receiving* it by Information from Others?

We find, in Fact, That We are Beings susceptible of Impression from external Agents. We can receive Ideas of Their Will or Pleasure simply considered, whether They do, or do not, think fit to assign Their Reasons for it ; which plainly shews, That the Reason of the Thing is far from being the *Only* Vehicle in which Another's Will can be conveyed to Us. And, if the Author of Nature has given to One Man *this* Power of communicating His Will to Another, it were strange, indeed, if the Author of Nature Himself should not have the *same*, or rather a far *more* close and intimate Access to Our Spirits, and be able to communicate His Will to Us in such a Way, as shall leave no Room to doubt, from *what* Quarter the Discovery comes.

BUT it will be said, ' That God, on ' this Supposition, must do Something ' *more*, than to make a bare Impression ' on the Organs of Sense.' Allowed,— and in that Case, where an Almighty Power is concerned, it implies no more  
 a Con-

a Contradiction to communicate His Will to the Human Soul, *without*, than *with* the Interposition of the bodily Organ. SERM.  
XIV.

BUT it is not easy to set this Point (which is indeed a Truth, belonging to Natural Religion) in a stronger Light, than is done to My Hand by the *Moral Philosopher*; an Author, whom I the rather quote, as What comes from Him, will not be ascribed to any *Prejudice* or Partiality in Favour of Revelation.

‘ If a Body, says He, be whirled about  
‘ a Center, it will acquire by such Cir-  
‘ cumvolution a Force, or Endeavour to  
‘ fly off from the Center of its Motion;  
‘ and the Force generated, in a given  
‘ Time, will always be *proportioned* to  
‘ certain Measures or Degrees, that are de-  
‘ termined by Mathematical *Demonstra-*  
‘ *tion*. Now, of the Truth of this Pro-  
‘ position You and I (speaking to His Bro-  
‘ ther Philosopher) are *demonstrably* cer-  
‘ tain, because We see the *necessary* Con-  
‘ nexion or Relation of the Ideas them-  
‘ selves. But let us suppose that another  
‘ Man, who knows Nothing of it, as a  
‘ Truth necessarily founded in Nature,  
‘ should

SERM.

XIV.

‘ should be *inspired* with it, or have it  
 ‘ *immediately* revealed to Him from God,  
 ‘ He would then be *as certain* of it, as  
 ‘ You or I can be ; because He would  
 ‘ connect the certain Truth of the Pro-  
 ‘ position with the necessary Veracity of  
 ‘ God.’

I WOULD not by making this (or in-  
 deed another Citation) be responsible for  
 every *Mode* of Expression, but, surely,  
 Our *Philosopher's* Remark has its Estab-  
 lishment in the Truth and Reason of  
 Things ; as also What He subjoins, to the  
 following Effect, a few Lines lower : ‘ If  
 ‘ God speaks to Me, immediately and di-  
 ‘ rectly, I believe Him upon *His Own*  
 ‘ Authority ; but, if a Man speaks to Me  
 ‘ as from God, I must take His Word  
 ‘ for it, unless He can prove to Me the  
 ‘ Natural Fitness and Reasonableness of  
 ‘ the Thing, and then I would take it  
 ‘ as coming from God, but not from any  
 ‘ Human Authority at all.’ Behold Here  
 is the Confession of a Man (whose Writ-  
 ings sufficiently clear Him from All Sus-  
 picion of Partiality in Favour of Scrip-  
 ture)



ture) a Confession, I say, of a Divine Communication or Impression upon the Mind, which wants Nothing to evidence it besides itself; and which takes Place, by Supposition, in that very Case, where the *Reason* of the Thing is not known, and an Evidence, which, though of a *different* Kind from Mathematic Demonstration, is yet (in this Writer's Judgment) productive of a *Certainty* equal to it.

BUT after All, if We look more narrowly into the Command, We shall find, That God condescended to let the *Patriarch* so far into the Reason of it, as was consistent with the End proposed by giving it. God did not, indeed, inform Him of His Intention to *prevent* His putting His Son to Death, because That would have defeated the End proposed. But so much may be gathered from the *Words* of the Command, That this whole Transaction, so far as it related to *Abraham*, was intended as a Trial of his Faith and Resignation to the Will of God.

AND He said, Take now Thy Son, Thine only Son, Isaac, whom Thou lovest,  
 ----and offer Him for a Burnt-Offering,  
 upon

SERM. *upon One of the Mountains, which I will*  
 XIV. *tell Thee.*

It should Here be observed, That, in All solid and judicious Writers, Epithets and Terms of Description are not thrown in, merely to fill up a Gap; They serve for a *higher* Use, and are designed to convey some Idea to the Hearer's Mind. As therefore the Son, intended in this Command, is specified by *Name*, I ask, For what Reason that Characteristic is subjoined, *Thy Son, whom Thou lovest*, unless it was to convey this Idea to *Abraham*, That the Gift or Offering, which God required at His Hands, should be Something greatly *endeared* to *Abraham* Himself. In other Words, He might with Reason infer, That This at least was intended by the Command, to see Whether He would resign, no trivial Possession, but Something on which His Heart was set, in Obedience to the Will of God? And if that additional Epithet of *Thine only Son* should relate, as in Truth it must, to that *Circumstance* so peculiar to *Isaac*, I mean, That in Him (and Him *alone*) the Original Promise, relating to His Seed, should be

be fulfilled ; He might with Ease infer, SERM.  
That God intended by this Command to XIV.  
put His *Faith* in God to the Trial, and  
draw from Him a Proof, in Fact, of His  
believing this most religious Truth, That  
the God, *who promised, was able*, even in  
Spite of Death itself, to *perform*. It was,  
therefore, a just Construction, which the  
Author to the *Hebrews* puts upon the  
whole Affair : By *Faith*, *Abraham*, when  
tried, offered up *Isaac* ; and He, that had  
received the Promises, offered up His only  
begotten Son, of whom it was said, That in  
*Isaac* Thy Seed shall be called, accounting,  
or by Reason inferring, That God was able  
to raise Him up, even from the Dead.

It has been already shewn, That *Abra-*  
*ham*, by the same just Exercise of Rea-  
son, might perceive, That God, without  
any Violation of Right, might dispose  
of *Isaac* as Himself thought fit ; but This  
is not *All*. Our Historian does not say,  
That *Abraham* was commanded to inflict  
the Sufferings of Death upon His Son, by  
Way of *Punishment* : But only to \* *make*

\* *Vid.* the Original.



SERM. *Him ascend*, by Way of Burnt-Offering,  
 XIV. *i. e.* by Way of *Gift* to God, and a Gift  
 so circumstanced, that the *Whole* should  
 be resigned to God's Disposal, and no  
 Part of it be reserved for the earthly Pro-  
 prietor.

As therefore *Abraham*, from the Na-  
 ture of the Command, was obliged to re-  
 gard it, in *this* Point of View, in which  
 All Idea of Punishment is set aside, that  
 Objection, which is grounded on the In-  
 congruity of Punishment and Innocence,  
 vanishes; and (which is of no less Conse-  
 quence to a considerate Mind) it necessa-  
 rily follows, That a Suffering, *so circum-*  
*stanced* as This (considering the Goodness  
 of God) would turn up, not to the De-  
 triment, but Advantage of the Sufferer.

WE are informed from another Part  
 of the History, That *Abraham* did not  
 lay aside the Exercise of Reason under  
 these Divine Communications; nor did  
 He, in the true Spirit of *Enthusiasm*, and  
 misguided Zeal, imagine, That a Com-  
 mand from God could dispense with the  
 Obligation of Justice; otherwise, That  
 Sentiment could never have dropped from  
 His

His Lips, *Wilt Thou destroy the Righteous with the Wicked? That be far from Thee to do after this Manner; that the Righteous should be as the Wicked.* SERM. XIV.

His Faith and Resignation, how strong soever, could digest no such Confusion of Characters. And since the Author to the *Hebrews* has observed, That He applied the same just Exercise of *Reason* to the Case before Us; I have shewn, That the Command itself was so circumstanced, and so expressed, as to afford Him sufficient Room and Opportunity for it.

AND thus have I endeavoured to clear up, and vindicate this Branch of the Scripture-History: Not that, in Our Defence of *Christianity*, We are obliged to support every Paragraph; either in the Old or New Testament; but because, upon examining the Fact, it appears to Me to be so far from contradicting Natural Religion, That, on the Contrary, it sets some *material* Truths of Natural Religion in the strongest Point of View; and, by so doing, it is subservient to the same good End, in Common with all other Parts of Revelati-

SERM. on, I mean, the Inforcing the Religion of  
XIV. Nature.

AND now I shall only add, That it is with no small Pleasure I find the Cause, in which We are embarked, maintains so good a Harmony and Correspondency with Natural Religion, that We are supplied from the Latter, with those very Materials, by which We defend the Former: Whoever, for Instance, espouses this Scripture-Fact, will find certain Truths of Natural Religion (if Truths, relating to God, be such) on His Side, That, like so many close *Confederates*, or Allies, will support Him against the briskest Attacks from the opposite Quarter; as on the Other Hand, Whoever opposes this Scripture-Fact, or undertakes to prove, that an Act, *so* circumstanced as This, was wrong, may, indeed, amuse both Himself and His Readers, with some *general* Strokes about the Moral Finess and Reason of Things, but will find They fail Him, when He comes to apply Them to the *Case* before Us, and, if He attends to the just and necessary Consequence of His Own Reasoning, He will find



find it to overthrow that Moral Fitness for **SERM.**  
which He pleads, and terminate in some **XIV.**  
Conclusion or Other, that is alike inde-  
fensible under All Religion, whether Na-  
tural or Revealed.

## S E R M O N XV.

The *Mahometan* Revelation considered.

I JOHN IV. I.

*Believe not every Spirit, but try  
the Spirits, Whether They are of  
God.*

SERM.  
XV.

THE Caution, which the Apostle gives Us in the Text, though more *immediately* levelled against His Own Cotemporaries, will admit of a far greater Extent.

FOR the same good Sense, that puts Us upon examining *One* Pretension to Revelation, before We receive it, will, if duly attended to, oblige Us to examine *All*. Such is the Law of Reason, and Natural Religion, which informs Us, That We must not hastily admit any Revelation to  
come

come from God, before We have enquired, Whether it has the *Stamp* of Divinity upon it. And, if an Enquiry be set on Foot, Here the Principle of *Reason* must interpose of Course, for it is an Affair that falls within its Province ; and, till God shall give Us some *Other* Faculties, We must make the best Use of Those We have ; that by Them We may distinguish the *genuine* Coin from the false, and not confound the Prophet with the Impostor.

WHAT, therefore, if We should apply the Rule of the Text, to the Founder of the *Mahometan* Religion ; and This the rather, because this Religion has, for some Ages, made a very considerable Figure, and overspread a great Part of the Habitable World ? And, Here, We will examine, *first*, the Proofs of His Mission ; and, *secondly*, the Consistency of His Religion with Another, which He Himself *allows* for true, and to which He appeals, in Confirmation of His Own.

THE *first* Thing, to be discussed, is the Proof of His Mission.



SERM. *MAHOMET*, or *Mohammed* the Son  
 XV. of *Abdallah*, was born at *Mecca* in *Ara-*  
*bia*, and made His Claim to Inspiration  
 in the former Part of the Seventh Cen-  
 tury. His Doctrine is contained in a  
 Book, which, He tells Us, was brought  
 down by the Angel *Gabriel* from Heaven.  
 He acknowledges the Divine Authority  
 of *Christ* and *Moses*; and as frankly de-  
 clares, That whatever Revelation was made  
 to Him, does attest the *Truth* and *Validi-*  
*ty* of Theirs. What He professed, was  
 to restore the true Religion (that has,  
*indeed*, been the Same, for Substance, in  
 All Revelations that came from God) the  
 Religion professed by *Adam*, by *Noah*, by  
*Abraham*, by *Moses*, by *Christ*, and by  
*All* the Prophets, to restore the Worship  
 of the *One* God, clear of that Idolatry, into  
 which the Generality of His Countrymen,  
 the *Arabians*, had fallen, and also clear of  
 those Corruptions and Superstitions, which  
 the Later *Jews*, and *Christians*, had intro-  
 duced into Their respective Professions.

AND, *indeed*, so much must be owned,  
 in Justice to Him, That (tho' mistaken in  
*some* Things) He has advanced a far more  
*simple*

*simple* and consistent Scheme of Religion, SERM.,  
than even the *Christianity* of *those* Times, XV.  
or what, under the *Name* of *Christianity*,  
is too frequently taught in Our Own.

BUT, how much soever Mankind are  
*beholden* to Him, for so considerable a  
Piece of Service, yet, if His Pretension  
to *Inspiration* be examined, whether by  
that *Original Christianity*, to which He  
appeals, or by Natural Religion, or by  
Both put together, His Title to it must  
fall to the Ground.

A PERSON, who tells Us, That it is  
the Will of God, that He should pro-  
pagate the Truth with *Sword* in Hand;  
That He has, upon *this* Account, a Com-  
mand from God to invade His Neighbours,  
and dispossess Them from Their *Civil*  
Rights and Properties, had Need to in-  
force His Pretensions with the *amplest*  
Proof.

ONE or Two *disputable* Arguments will  
not suffice in a Case, where so many  
Acts of Violence and Hostility must be  
done, so much Blood must, of Necessity,  
be spilled, and so great a Carnage made  
of Mankind,

SERM. WE cannot, with Safety, espouse this  
 XV. Cause, were it only for the Guilt, which  
 seems, at least, to accompany it ; unless  
 We have a sufficient Warrant to bear  
 Us out, and have the plain and uncon-  
 tested Marks of a Divine Commission.

IT should not be dissembled, That the  
 Fact has been frequently misrepresented  
 by Us ; and, perhaps, *More* fathered up-  
 on *this* Method of propagating the Faith,  
 than either the Author of it intended,  
 or than His *Scheme* itself will bear.

IT was with Him a Maxim, That no  
*Force* is to be offered in Religion ; and  
 Whoever consults the *Eastern* History,  
 will easily inform Himself, That, as of-  
 ten as the *Mahometan* Armies made Them-  
 selves Masters of a Place, They either  
 expelled the Inhabitants, or demanded of  
 Them that *Tribute* which belonged to the  
 Conquerors, and left Them in the free  
 Possession of Their Religion. I need not  
 add, That, in Virtue of this Original  
 Constitution, some Thousands of *Christian*  
 Churches are, to this Day, subsisting in  
 the *Mahometan* Territories ; How far this  
 Toleration has been extended to *other* Re-  
 ligions,



ligions, I cannot so well affirm, but, taking Things at the *best*, it still remains to be enquired, What *Proofs* of His Commission? What Evidence of a Warrant from Above, thus to invade and disturb the *Civil Rights* and Properties of Mankind? SERM. XV.

As to the *Miracles* that are ascribed to Him, not to observe, That *Some* of Them are of too trifling a Nature to admit of a Divine Operation, They are (as *Abulpharagius* the Historian observes) so small in Number, and so poorly attested, that the most Considerate of the *Mahometan* Persuasion choose rather not to insist upon Them. They abandon this Post, as not being of *sufficient* Strength, and place the chief Stress of Their Defence upon *Another* Quarter.

OUR Prophet, say They, was destitute of All Advantages of Human Literature, and yet He brings with Him so correct and *finished* a Composition, as surpasses Imitation. We defy the most learned Pens to produce its Equal. You need only compare the well-known *Defects* of Our Prophet's Education

SERM. ' cation with the Greatness of this Per-  
 XV. ' formance, to convince You, It was none  
 { ' of His. A Book, *so* circumstanced, can-  
 ' not with Reason be supposed to have  
 ' been the Work of Man. Its Birth is  
 ' *Sacred*, and its Original *Divine*.'

AND, indeed, *Mahomet* Himself has  
 shewn Them the Way in this Method of  
 Reasoning. For, as often as He was chal-  
 lenged by the Tribe of *Coreish* to work  
 some Miracle, and to give Them the like  
 Public Proof of His Mission with *Christ*,  
 and Other Prophets, He staves off that  
 Kind of Trial, either by the supposed *In-*  
*sufficiency* of Miracles to obtain the End of  
 Conviction, or by appealing to *this* Mas-  
 ter-Piece of His; a Volume too perfect  
 in its Kind, to come from a Man that  
 could neither write nor read. He tells  
 Them in the *vth* and *xviiith* Chapters of  
 the *Coran*, ' That, notwithstanding all the  
 ' Miracles, which *Jesus* wrought before  
 ' the *Jews*, or *Moses* in the Court of *Pha-*  
 ' *raoh*, neither of them could escape the  
 ' Charge of Sorcery.' And in the *xiiiith*  
 Chapter He affirms, ' That, though a Re-  
 ' velation should have been given to His  
 ' Own

‘ Own Cotemporaries, by which Moun- SERM.  
 ‘ tains were removed, and the Earth cleft XV.  
 ‘ asunder, it were not sufficient to work  
 ‘ upon Their Unbelief. God, says He,  
 ‘ will lead into Error whom He pleases,  
 ‘ and direct to Himself Him that repents  
 ‘ —We have sent down the Coran with  
 ‘ Truth; and We have sent Thee, in no o-  
 ‘ ther Capacity, than to be a Bearer of  
 ‘ good Tidings, and Denouncer of Threaten-  
 ‘ ings!

IT is a Point of Prudence in any Pre-  
 tender to Revelation, to decline a *Test*, by  
 which He is conscious, that His Preten-  
 sion cannot stand, and accordingly He de-  
 clines the Test of Miracles. But, if We  
 consider the *Genius* of the Age and Coun-  
 try in which *Mahomet* appeared, He might  
 with greater Safety appeal to a Proof of  
*Another Kind*.

HOWEVER the *Arabians* might value  
 Themselves upon the Purity of Their Style,  
 or Elegance of Composition, it is well  
 known, That Their Taste for Literature  
 ran very low; to that Degree, That, when  
 a few Years after Their Prophet's Death,  
 this People had made Themselves Masters  
 of



SERM. of *Alexandria* in *Egypt*, They burnt and  
 XV destroyed the most noble Library under  
 the Sun.

THAT Fund of Learning, which had been growing under so many Princes, was distributed amongst the hot Baths of the City for so much Fewel ; and This not by the Indiscretion of the Soldiery, but by an Order of Court and Act of Government. I will not say Here, with the Author of the *Characteristicks*, ‘ That so ‘ barbarous is the accompanying *Policy* of ‘ these *Eastern* Religionists, that They discourage, and, in Effect, extinguish All ‘ true Learning, Science, and the politer ‘ Arts ;’ since We are informed from History, That Their Princes *became*, in Time, great Promoters and Encouragers of Them. But This I may venture to say, That, if the Founder of this Religion had to do with so *illiterate* a People, He ran no such Hazard by making that Challenge, ‘ *If Ye be in Doubt concerning the ‘ Revelation, which We have sent down to ‘ Our Servant, produce a Chapter like it.*’ And again, ‘ *Should the whole Race of ‘ Men and Genii assemble, on Purpose, to ‘ produce*

*Revelation considered.*

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‘*produce a Book like to This, They could* SERM.  
‘*not do it.*’ XV.

A PEOPLE, who could thus condemn in the *Lump*, all the great Masters of Antiquity, and, so far as in Them lay, erase every Improvement of *Greece* and *Rome*, must have been good Judges, indeed, in a Cause, where the Knowledge of Books and Human Literature are concerned. And This I may venture to add, That, after all the Advantage, which *Mahomet* or His Followers have made of His *Want* of Education, He is allowed, on all Sides, to have been a Person of great Abilities, and an happy Memory. He travelled from His Youth, and, doubtless, improved the Gifts of Nature by that Knowledge, which He acquired of Men and Things. He made no Pretensions to Inspiration before the Fortieth Year of His Age; and, I think, the second or third *Profelyte*, which he gained, was a *Christian*, who (besides what Knowledge He may be supposed to have had of Scripture) could write in the *Hebrew* Character. And, not long after, We are informed, That One of the most celebrated

SERM. celebrated Poets of the Age came over to  
 XV. His Cause.

NOR did *Mahomet* Himself publish the  
*Whole Book* at once. It came out at different Times, by Fragments and Parcels, that were by One of His Successors digested into the present Body.

It must be owned, in Justice to the Performance, That it appears in a much better Dress in the *Original*, than in the best and *latest* of Our *European* Versions. For (not to observe, That the Beauties of *Sound* are not so easily transfused from One Language into Another) it has suffered, in my Opinion, the *greatest* Injury in those Places, where the Thought and Diction are both of a Piece; through the over-acted *Fidelity* of Our Translator, who has, indeed, preserved the *Sublimity* of the Thought, but, by too close and *literal* a Version, has intirely divested it of all the *Harmony* of Numbers, and *Majesty* of Style. But, after All, as the Person, under whose Name it goes, submits it to Human Arbitration, and is willing to be tried by the Rules of Criticism, it becomes a Judge of good Writing to balance



lance its *Beauties* with its *Defects*, and SERM.  
compare the Whole with the Account XV.  
of the Author's Life and Person. For,  
if This be well adjusted, I believe, We  
shall be under no Necessity of having Re-  
course to a *Miracle*. This boasted Volume  
(for any Thing as yet appearing to the  
Contrary) may be of an *earthly Extract*.  
Though, had the Work been wrought  
up to a still greater Degree of Perfection,  
I believe, We should have contented Our-  
selves with admiring the Author's Genius,  
or at least the Wisdom of His *Correspon-*  
*dence*; but by no Means have judged it  
a sufficient Proof of a Doctrine, which  
has set almost one Half of the Habitable  
World in Arms; and (if I understand it  
right) has *entailed* the like *Medley* of War-  
fare and Religion on the latest Posterity.  
I come now, *in the second Place*, to ex-  
amine the Consistency of *Mabomet's* Reve-  
lation with Another, which *He* allows for  
true, and to which He appeals in Confir-  
mation of His Own.

A LATE *Mabometan* Prince has been  
heard to say, 'That, if He really believed  
' the *Jews* crucified the *Messiah*, He would  
not

SERM. ' not suffer a Man of Them to continuè

XV. ' in His Dominions.' That Prince was not singular in this Opinion. He spake the Language of His Religion, and Doctrine of His Prophet. For the Author of the *Coran* affirms, ' That God rescued the *Christ* ' (when led to Execution) out of the ' Hands of the *Jews*, and substituted a ' Phantom, which that deluded People ' mistook for Him, and crucified in His ' Stead.' By this Assertion, which He puts into the *Mouth* of God, He not only overthrows that beauteous Order, which God (if the *Christian* Account is true) had pre-established with Reference to the Sufferings of *Christ*, and the *Glories that should follow* ; but is caught, if I may so say, in His Own Toils, by advancing, in the *Name* of God, an Assertion, which contradicts Another Revelation, which He allows for true, and to which He appeals in Confirmation of His Own.

IN the i<sup>id</sup> Chapter of the *Coran*, He introduces God speaking, as follows, ' *We gave a Revelation to Moses, and We sent after Him various Messengers ; and We gave to Jesus, the Son of Mary, the most* ' *evident*

‘ evident Proofs of His Mission, and We SERM.  
‘ assisted Him with the Holy Ghost.’ And XV.

Christ Himself, in the *iii*d Chapter, is brought in, as appealing to His Own Miracles, in Proof of His Mission: ‘ I will  
‘ heal the Blind, and Leper; and I will  
‘ raise the Dead by God’s Permission. I  
‘ am come to You with a Sign from Your  
‘ Lord: Therefore fear God and obey Me.’

Who does not see, That Mahomet attests here the Truth of Our Saviour’s Mission; He confesses, That Jesus of Nazareth was sent of God, and had accordingly a just Title to Our Faith and Obedience. But now, let Us compare this Confession with What the same Writer affirms in so many Words, in the *iv*th Chapter, concerning the Sufferings of Christ,  
‘ They slew Him not, neither did They crucify Him, but Something like Him was  
‘ practised upon Them, (i. e. an Illusion  
‘ was made upon Their Senses) of a Certainty They did not kill Him, but God took Him to Himself. And He adds, That this Deliverance of Christ was a Divine Stratagem, or Instance of Divine Wisdom and Power.



SERM. THAT *Jesus of Nazareth* suffered by  
 XV. the *Jews*, and *Romans*, is a Fact well at-  
 tested in History. Both *Christian* and *Gentile* Historians relate it ; and the *Jews* Themselves, tho' *Parties* concerned in the Crime, do not disown it : So that We have the highest Reason to believe it. And That *Christ* Himself foretold as much, That the *Chief Priests* and *Scribes* should condemn Him to Death, and deliver Him to the *Gentiles*, to mock, and scourge, and crucify Him ; and that He should rise again on the Third Day, is alike attested, by Our Saviour's *Cotemporaries*, by Men who, in this Particular, could neither be imposed upon Themselves, nor be with Reason suspected of a Design to impose a Falsity upon Others. If therefore *Christianity* be true, Will it not follow of Course, That *Mahomet's Revelation* (in this Particular at least) must be false ? Nay more, whether *Christianity* be true, or not, still, if, from uncontested History, it can be made to appear, That *Jesus of Nazareth* did suffer upon the Cross, *Mahomet's Revelation* is detected of Untruth. And this Charge of Inconsistency comes with a new Force  
 up-

upon Him, if it can also be made to appear, That *Christ* foretold His Sufferings. For, if so, a Person confessed on *Both* Sides to be a Prophet of God (and whose *Moral* Character, as yet, remains unshaken) foretells an Event, with Reference to Himself, which the *Revelation* of *Mahomet* absolutely denies.

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XV.

THUS I have, by Way of *Specimen*, examined the Validity of the *Mahometan* Religion; and I was the more willing to do it, in *this* Place, as, by keeping it in Our Eye, We shall be better able to examine *another* Revelation, which in *some* Things resembles it, and which, for that Reason, may be in Danger of being *confounded* with it. But, waving that Work to the next Discourse, I shall conclude at present, by observing, That there is scarce *any* Evil, but some Good or Other may be brought out of it. And (not to insist on the Advantage of having so *great* a Part of Mankind kept clear of those gross Errors and Superstitions, which prevail to this Day, both in the *Pagan* and *Christian* World) We *Christians* may reap this Benefit at least from a *false* Revelation, to be con-

SERM. *firmed* in the Belief of the *true*. Let any

XV. One *compare* the Founders of the *Christian*

and *Mahometan* Religions together, let Him oppose *Person* to Person, and *Doctrine* to Doctrine, and *Miracles* to Miracles, and *Predictions* to Predictions, and then, after having made the Comparison in every Light, ask Himself, Which bids fairest to come from God ?

S E R M.



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## S E R M O N XVI.

The Extirpation of the *Canaanites*  
considered.

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LE V. xviii. 25.

*And the Land is defiled ; there-  
fore do I visit the Iniquities there-  
of upon it ; and the Land vo-  
miteth out its Inhabitants.*

**I**F the present Dispensations of Pro-  
vidence should not be considered, as  
certain *Preludes* to the future Judg-  
ment, They afford Us, at least, so many  
Proofs in Fact of God's *Moral Govern-  
ment*, and serve to remind Us of that All-  
righteous Being, that has the Cause of  
Truth at Heart, whose *Face is set a-  
gainst Them that do Evil, to cut off Their  
Remembrance from the Earth.*

SERM.

XVI.

IN this Point of View, I consider the History of the Flood, the Destruction of *Sodom* and the neighbouring Towns by Fire from Heaven, the Plagues of *Egypt*, the Extermination of the *Canaanites*, and, Lastly, (as *there is no Respect of Persons with God*) the Extermination of that very People, whom He employed in the Expulsion of the Former; according to that Caution, which the Founder of Their Polity gave Them, in this Context; where, after having enumerated the Detail of Vices which prevailed amongst the *Canaanites*, He adds, That, should the *Jews* take after the bad Example of Their Predecessors, in the *Land*, the *Land* would vomit Them out for Their Wickedness, as it had vomited out the Nations before Them: The like general Corruption of Manners issuing in the like general Calamity and Punishment.

BUT since some considerable Objections have been raised against this Branch of the Scripture-History, and since it becomes the Friends of Truth to admit of Nothing without due Examination, I must again exhort You to act in Character, by taking these

these Objections into a close and serious  
Consideration.

SERM.  
XVI.

IN Historic Facts the first Query, that would occur to a considerate Mind, is, Whether the Fact itself be of such a Kind, as implies no Contradiction to suppose it true, for, if it does, it carries its own immediate Refutation along with it, and, as such, may fairly be exploded, without giving Ourselves the Trouble to enquire into the Historic Evidence; no Historic Proof, or Testimony whatever, being able to support a Fact, that is of such a Kind, as implies a Contradiction to the Reason of Things, to suppose it true.

ACCORDINGLY, the most considerable Opposer of this Branch of the Scripture-History has taken this very Method; He has examined the Nature of the Fact itself, and has endeavoured from Thence to shew, That, should We suppose it true, some Contradiction or other will follow upon that Supposition. And since This is, indeed, the main Hinge, upon which the Controversy turns, I will consider it at large; as hoping to shew, in Vindication of the *Mosaic Dispensation* (not to



SERM. say Our Own, which is connected with it)  
 XVI. that, should We suppose this Fact for  
 true, no such Contradiction will follow,  
 as Our Objector imagines.

You will only take Care to carry this Remark along with You, That Whoever reasons upon the Nature of any Fact, must, in Justice to the Subject, take in the *Whole* of the Fact; and consequently the true State of the Controversy is this, Whether, supposing the *Whole* Fact for true, as it stands related by the Historian, any Contradiction will follow from it? And, if so---since the Historian has not barely related a Commission from God, to exterminate this wicked and idolatrous People, but also related, That this Commission was both preceded and accompanied with the most remarkable Displays of the Divine Power, the true State of the Controversy is, Whether, supposing a Commission, *so circumstanced*, for true, any Contradiction will follow from it?

THE Author, with whom I have to do, is well advised of This, as will appear from the several Objections, which He has raised; some of which relate to One  
 Part

Part of the Fact, and some to Another ; SERM.  
XVI.  
tho, I think, the main Strength of His Reasoning may be reduced under the *Three* following Heads :

*FIRST*, That, should this Command from God have been proved to the *Israelites*, it would not have borne Them out ; because no Authority can justify an Act, which is, in its own Nature, wrong.

*SECONDLY*, That the Command itself was not accompanied with sufficient Proof of its being from God, no, not if the Miracles, with which it was accompanied, should be supposed for true ; because, the Thing commanded being, in its own Nature, wrong, We can never be *so* certain of the Command's being from God, as We are certain, That God has forbid the Same by the Light of Nature.

AND, *LASTLY*, That, should the Plea of a Divine Commission, so circumstanced, be admitted, it would destroy all internal Proofs of the Falshood of any Religion, and leave no Criterions of this Kind,

SERM. Kind, by which to detect and refute Im-  
 XVI. posture.

THE *first* Objection, and which, indeed, is the Basis and Ground-work to the Rest, is this, That, should this Command from God have been sufficiently proved to the *Israelites*, it would not have borne Them out; because no Authority can justify an Act, in its own Nature, wrong.

HIS Words are these, ‘ If there is a  
 ‘ Law of Nature, with the Observing of  
 ‘ which, God *cannot* dispense, either in  
 ‘ Himself, or in His Creatures, and no  
 ‘ Religion can be true, that, in the mi-  
 ‘ nutest Circumstance, is contrary to its  
 ‘ Righteousness, How can You account  
 ‘ for the Conduct of the *Jews*, in inva-  
 ‘ ding, and that too, without Declarati-  
 ‘ on of War, a free and independent Na-  
 ‘ tion, against whom They had no just  
 ‘ Ground of Complaint, upon the Foot of  
 ‘ any prior Wrong?’ In this Objection,  
 the present Fact is supposed to have been  
 inconsistent with *that* Law of Nature,  
 which God cannot dispense with, either  
 in Himself, or in Others; and where,  
 by



by Consequence, the Plea of a Divine SERM.  
Commission, supposing it true, would not XVI,  
bear Them out. }

BUT, in order to rectify this Mistake,  
We want no better Materials, than what  
are provided to Our Hand, by a late cele-  
brated Writer, who has sufficiently clear-  
ed Himself of all Suspicion of too great an  
Attachment to the *Mosaic* Constitution :

‘ To prevent Mistake, says the *Moral*  
‘ *Philosopher*, We ought carefully to di-  
‘ stinguish between the eternal, immuta-  
‘ ble, and temporary Laws of God. The  
‘ great Rule of Rectitude, or Law of  
‘ Moral Truth and Righteousness, is of  
‘ eternal, unchangeable Force and Obli-  
‘ gation, to all rational intelligent Beings  
‘ alike, and cannot, under any possible  
‘ Circumstances, be dispensed with, or  
‘ set aside. But *particular* Actions, which  
‘ are connected with this general Law,  
‘ and make a Part of it at *one* Time, and  
‘ upon *such* and *such* Supposition, may  
‘ not be [a Part of it] at *another* Time,  
‘ upon *other* Suppositions, and under *dis-*  
‘ *ferent* Circumstances ?’

I WOULD

SERM.

XVI.

I WOULD not by this, or any other Citation, be responsible for every Mode of Expression that occurs, but His Distinction itself is just; and, if clothed in a more familiar Stile, will become obvious enough to the meanest Capacity. For Who does not see, That, place a Moral Agent, in what State or Circumstance soever, He is still obliged to act What is just and right. Here is What Our Philosopher means by that Rule of Rectitude in General, which is of eternal Obligation, to All intelligent Beings, not the First and Greatest excepted, and which cannot, by any possible Circumstance, be dispensed with, or set aside. And yet, notwithstanding this General Rule, Who does not see, That, in particular Instances, a just and good Being (acting as such) must vary His Conduct, as the State or Circumstances of Things shall vary, on which the Moral Fitness of His Conduct depends; He must so for this very Reason, because that Conduct or Action, which would have been just and right under *One* State or Circumstance of Things, ceases to be so, under *Another*.

You

You will please to remember, that SERM.  
I only cite this Writer, with Reference XVI.  
to the Distinction itself. As to the Use,   
which I intend to make of it, This, I  
confess, is foreign enough to His Design.  
But such is the Force of Truth, that it frequently draws from Men such Concessions,  
as overthrow that very Cause in which  
They are embarked; as I hope to shew,  
with Reference to the Case before Us.  
For, should it be *supposed* for true, That  
the *Jews* could not, consistently with the  
Rule of Right, invade, of their Own  
Heads, a free and independent Nation,  
&c. because One Nation, by *Supposition*,  
has no such Right to chastise the Vices of  
Another. Yet, if God Himself had a  
Right to exterminate this most profligate  
and abandoned People, which is not, as  
yet, denied, and if a Commission from  
God, from the *Nature* of the Thing, con-  
veys that Right to Another, it necessarily  
follows, That, how culpable soever it  
would be for the *Jews* to have made this  
Descent, without a Commission; not so,  
with it. Nor will it at all follow from  
Hence, as Our Objector fears, That God  
dispenses



SERM. dispenses with that absolutely eternal  
 XVI. and immutable Law, by which God  
 Himself and all other Beings are obliged ; for what is that Law, but This, That a Moral Agent, place Him in whatever State, Circumstance, or Relation, should act what is Morally fit and right : And such was the Conduct of the *Jews*, upon this Occasion, as related by *Moses* ; it not being a simple Invasion, but an Invasion supported by a Divine Command. Or take it thus :

WOULD Our Objector throw any Force into His Argument, He must either prove, That the *Canaanites* were not, in Fact, that greatly corrupt and immoral People, which is Here described, or, if they were (and if \* supporting by their Example such brutal and inhuman Practices, as are destructive of Human Society) still it would answer no valuable End to Mankind, nor was at all conducive to the *General Good*, to have a Community (so circumstanced) dissolved ; since, on Either of these Suppositions, there would be

\* Vid. *Verses* 21, 22, 23.

no Ground to believe the Commission of SERM.  
the *Jews* was from God. XVI.

BUT, till Either of these Points is *prov-*  
*ed*, neither God nor His Instruments can  
be blamed, when they lopped off so cor-  
rupt a Part—and, by the Dissolution of  
one *single* Polity, dissolved a Power, which  
supported Practices inconsistent with the  
*Good* of the *Whole*.

I THEREFORE conclude, That, tho'  
God, indeed, cannot dispense with the ab-  
solute and immutable Obligation of doing  
What is just and right, *i. e.* dispense with  
the Moral Fitness and Reason of Things,  
yet a Command *from* God will either  
make or imply *some* Change in the State,  
Circumstance, or Relation of Things (on  
which the Moral Fitness of the Human  
Conduct depends) and consequently it will  
be fit and right to do That, in Virtue of a  
Divine Command, which would not have  
been fit to do, without it.

BUT, the better to see the Weakness of  
His Objection, let Us apply it to some in-  
different Case, and where there is less  
Room for Prejudice to interpose; I say  
then, That *Michael*, or any Other of the  
Angelic

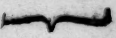
SERM. Angelic Body, abstracted from a Divine

XVI. Commission, has no *more* Right to invade the Human Life and Property, than *Joshua* or *Moses* ; and therefore We will place Him in Their Room. We will suppose, for Argument-sake, That *Michael*, at the Head of the Angelic Host, had, by Commission, executed the Divine Vengeance on this wicked and idolatrous People. Now let Us try the Force of His Argument :

‘ IF there is a Law of Nature, with the  
 ‘ Observing of which God cannot dis-  
 ‘ pense, in Himself or in His Creatures,—  
 ‘ tell Me, How You can account for the  
 ‘ Conduct of *Michael* and His Angels in  
 ‘ invading, and that too without any De-  
 ‘ claration of War, the *Canaanites*, a free  
 ‘ independent Nation, and against whom  
 ‘ They had not the least Ground of Com-  
 ‘ plaint, upon the Foot of any prior  
 ‘ Wrong ?’

BUT surely it is easy enough to conceive, That, how indefensible soever it would have been for *Michael* and His Angels to have made this Descent, without a Commission ; not so, with it. Nor will



will it follow, as Our Objector imagines, SERM.  
That God, by issuing out such a Commis- XVI.  
sion, would *dispense* with the immutable   
Law of Nature ; for What is that Law of  
Nature, but That a Moral Agent (place  
Him in whatever Circumstance or Rela-  
tion) should act What is just and right ?  
And such was the Conduct of *Michael*,  
supposing His Commission for true. If  
*the* Law of Nature was in Danger of  
Violation, it must have been, on the con-  
trary Supposition, I mean, by *Michael's*  
having refused Obedience to the Divine  
Command, when made known, and, by  
so doing, to contradict this eternal Truth,  
That the Governor of the Universe has a  
Right to exterminate a People, ripe for  
Destruction, whether by an immediate  
Act of His Own Power, or by some sub-  
ordinate Agents and Instruments employ-  
ed and commissioned by Him.

BUT Our Objector adds, ‘ If the Gos-  
‘ pel inculcates all such Precepts of Natu-  
‘ ral Religion, as require doing Good to  
‘ *Jew* and *Gentile*, even the Same as We  
‘ expect from Them, and that We are  
‘ indispensably bound to allow to all O-  
VOL. I. X thers

SERM. 'thers the same Right of judging for  
 XVI. 'Themselves, as We claim for Ourselves.'

To Which I answer, That, how just soever this Remark may be in itself, it does not appear to reach this particular Case : Unless it be shewn, That it is a Violation of the Law of Goodness, for One Set of Beings to execute the Command of God upon Another. And, as to the Objection from the Liberty of Private Judgment, neither will This reach the Case ; unless it be proved, That this Right, which every One has to judge for Himself, overthrows the aforesaid Right, which the Governor of the Universe has to exterminate, not merely upon the Pretence of Idolatry (as the *Case* is frequently misrepresented) but a most corrupt and inhuman People ; whether He thinks fit to do it, by an immediate Act of His Own Power, or by any subordinate Agents employed and commissioned by Him. And whereas He adds, ' That, in order to make ' Them see, that God was concerned in ' the Affair, He ought to have distinguished between the Innocent and Guilty : ' He forgets, That the Author of Nature

Nature observes no such Distinction, in SERM.  
Our Common Mortality, which yet, I XVI.  
hope, He will allow to be of Divine Ap-  
pointment. He forgets, That, in Natio-  
nal Calamities, there may be good and va-  
luable Ends proposed, by suffering the In-  
nocent to be involved with the Guilty,  
and that there is no possible Inconvenience,  
which the Former may sustain, by this  
Constitution of Things, but which the  
Governor of the World has it in His Pow-  
er to ballance, and consequently there  
was no Need for making the aforesaid Di-  
stinction, to let Us see, That God was  
concerned in the Transaction.

By the Help of these Reflexions, You  
will discern the Weakness of His *next* Ob-  
jection, which supposes That a Command  
or Commission of this Kind is not capable  
*of Proof*. Should We admit the Miracles  
for true, because no One could be *as cer-*  
tain, That He has any such positive Com-  
mand from God, as He was, That God  
had forbid the Same by the Light of Na-  
ture.

THIS Objection, I confess, would have  
come with Weight, had the Thing com-  
manded



SERM. commanded been absolutely, and in all possible Circumstances or Relations, Morally unfit ; not so—when the Thing commanded, as I have already shewn, is of a different Kind.

SHOULD it, for Instance, be pretended, That God commands Us to honour Another Being upon a Level with Himself, Here, the Thing commanded being demonstrably wrong, and in all possible States and Circumstances Morally unfit, it might with Reason be objected, That We cannot be *as* certain We have such a Command from God, as We are certain by the Light of Nature, He has forbid the Same. But there is no such Contradiction to the Reason of Things, for the Governor of the World to destroy a People, ripe for Destruction, whether by an immediate Act of His Own Power, or by the Instrumentality of some Other Beings, commissioned by Him ; and therefore, *supposing* it for true, That the Light of Nature forbids to invade this People, without a Commission ; not so, with it. Nor should these Acts, which are essentially different, be confounded, no more than

than St. *Peter's* Attempting to walk upon the Sea, in Pursuance of a Command from *Christ*, should be confounded, with His Attempting to do the Same, of His Own Head. And, by the Way, This Author might prove as well, That St. *Peter's* Conduct was Morally unfit upon the first Supposition, by saying, That St. *Peter* could not be *so* certain, He had a Command to do it, as He was certain that God had forbid it Him by the Light of Nature. But surely it requires no great Degree of Penetration to see, That, tho' the Light of Nature forbid St. *Peter* to do This, of His Own Head, because the Act, *so circumstanced*, would be inconsistent with the Duty of Self-preservation; not so—if a Command from God, or the Son of God, should place Him in that *new State* or Circumstance, wherein that Objection is removed.

THE *third* Objection, which We have to consider, is this, That, should this Plea of a Divine Commission (*so circumstanced*) be received for valid, it would destroy *All* Internal Proofs of the Falseness of any Religion,

SERM. ligion, and leave Us no Criterion of this  
 XVI. Kind, by which to refute Imposture.

THE Objection is proposed in the Form of a Query, ' Whether, in this Case, the ' Plea of a Divine Command will not destroy *all* Internal Proofs of the Falshood ' of any Religion?

To Which I answer in the Negative, For, *in the first Place*, it will not destroy *that* Internal Proof of the Falshood of any Religion, which is grounded in any Propositions advanced therein, which are demonstrably false. And I am perswaded, which Way soever this ingenious Author should determine, with Reference to this particular Commission, He would not be at a Loss to disprove any Revelation, which should contradict the Unity, Supremacy, Free-Agency, or any other known Attribute of Deity, whether Natural or Moral.

UPON the same Foot, I might observe, That, which Way soever this ingenious Writer determines, with Reference to the Fact in Dispute, He would not want for Arguments by which to disprove the Commission of *Christ* Himself, had He



He advanced the same Set of Doctrines, with the Council of *Trent*, on the One Hand, or with some *Protestant* Synods and Confessions on the Other. Because, Both having advanced, in Turn, such Propositions as are *demonstrably* false, These contain a stronger Evidence against Their being from God, than any Prophecy or Miracle could produce, in Favour of Their being from Him.

I WILL venture to add still further, in *the second Place*, That neither will this Plea of a Divine Command destroy *that Internal* Proof of the Falshood of any Religion, which is grounded on some real Inconsistency which that Religion has with itself. In other Words, Which Way soever this Author should determine, with Regard to this particular Commission, He would not want for Arguments, by which to disprove that Man's Pretension to a Divine Commission, who should allow the Truth of the *Christian* Revelation, and yet, by the same Commission, oppose One of the most essential Articles of it. And, therefore, the Author of the *Mahometan* Institution could not well have

SERM. taken a more effectual Way to refute His  
XVI.

Own Pretensions, than by asserting so often as He does, in the Name of God, the Truth of the *Christian* Revelation, and yet introduce the Supreme Being, as saying to Our Lord, ' They did not crucify Thee, ' neither did They put Thee to Death, ' but I rescued Thee out of Their Hands, ' and some Phantom of imaginary Resemblance was substituted in Thy Room.'

BUT to come still closer to the Point, *in the third Place*, neither will this Plea of a Divine Command destroy *that Internal* Proof of a false Religion, which consists in making Converts by dint of Arms. Because to propagate Truth, in this Way, is to suppose, That God makes Use of Means, which are not suited to the End, and must draw after it one of these Absurdities, either That Men can throw off the Prejudices of Education, at an Hour's Warning, or That a *pretended* Conversion is preferable to an honest Infidelity. And, therefore, this Method of *Converting* by the Sword gives no very favourable Idea of any Cause whatever; and, for the same Reason, those Modern Writers among the  
*Jews,*

*Jews*, who put Their Own Constitution upon this Foot, have done a real Disservice to it. It carries, indeed, at first Blush, a greater Appearance of Humanity to offer Terms of Peace to an idolatrous City, provided They would renounce Their Idolatry, but I will venture to say, It is that Kind of Humanity, which, as long as the present Constitution of Nature remains undisturbed, can never have God for its Author. Because, how true soever it is, That God may exterminate or destroy a wicked and idolatrous People, by what Instruments Himself thinks fit to use, yet surely He cannot set on Foot that Method of Reforming Them, which is not adapted to Their very Nature on the One Hand, and would of Course involve Them in the Guilt of a forged and hypocritic Conversion on the Other.

Thus have I examined the *three* principal Objections, which the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* has advanced, and, if it be not judged too great a Trespass upon your Patience, I propose to consider the Rest in another Discourse. In the mean While, I shall make no other



SERM. ther Apology for the following Remark,  
 XVI. than This, That, as it grows out of the  
 present Controversy, so it has its Use, in  
 Our Enquiries after Truth.

How just soever Our first Principles or Maxims are, We may still be misled, if We do not reason as *justly* upon Them. And, I think, I may venture to add, That whatever Error is imbibed, in this Way, is so much the more likely to abide by Us. Because the Mind, having connected Both together, that very Assurance, which it has of the Justness and Certainty of the One, begets the strongest Prejudice against every Attempt to rectify the Other. To apply this Remark to the Case before Us.

AN Obligation to act What is just and right, of that absolute Kind, which God can neither dispense with in Himself, nor in Others, is a very just Principle; and so also is that particular Obligation, of Allowing to Another the same Right of Private Judgment, that We claim for Ourselves. Upon these just Principles does Our Objector set out; and I am apt to think, He would have saved Himself the  
 Trouble

Trouble of opposing this Branch of the Scripture-History, had He reasoned as *justly upon Them*. But, for Want of This, He applies Them to a Fact, which in Reality contains no Violation of Them. However, *the Net*, as the *Wise Man* observes, *is spread in vain in the Sight of any Bird*. And, I hope, by detecting the Snare, to have guarded both Myself, and My Hearers, from being caught therein.

SERM.

XVI.

S E R M.

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S E R M O N    X V I I .

The Extirpation of the *Canaanites*  
considered.

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L E V . x v i i i . 25.

*And the Land is defiled ; there-  
fore do I visit the Iniquities there-  
of upon it ; and the Land vo-  
miteth out its Inhabitants.*

S E R M .  
X V I I .

**S** O M E Truths are accompanied with a greater Degree of Abstruseness, and Difficulty than others ; and such Objections may be raised, as would naturally occur to any free and impartial Enquirer. For which Reason, it becomes Us, not to treat these Objections with an Air of Indifference, much less Resentment ; but consider, with Candor, What is offered on Both Sides the Question,



tion, and, by lending a dispassionate Ear to Another's Judgment, lay in the ampler Materials, by which to form and determine Our Own. SERM.  
XVII.

UPON this Foot I have endeavoured to examine this Branch of the *Mosaic* Constitution, which relates to the Extermination of the *Canaanites*. I have considered those Objections, which relate to the Morality of the Fact, and I trust to have shewn, That, supposing the Commission of the *Israelites* to be from God, His Command would bear Them out; nor would any such Violation of the Law of Nature ensue upon it, as the Writers of the opposite Side imagine. But, the Governor of the Universe being confessedly as wise, as He is just, it may with Reason be expected, That whatever Constitution comes from Him, should be alike consistent with Both. And, therefore, We must now proceed to consider some Objections of a different Kind, I mean such, as imply some Defect in Point of *Wisdom*. Because, if this Charge can be made good, it will effectually overthrow the Credibility

SERM. lity of the Fact, though it should be clear  
XVII. ed from That of Immorality.

THE Writer whom I cited in my *Last*,  
(consistently enough with that just Re-  
gard which He ever expresses for Natural  
Religion) does not deny, but ‘ God may  
‘ punish some wicked Nations with Death,  
‘ to fright Others from committing the  
‘ same Crimes.’ But then He objects as  
follows, ‘ Has not God a Thousand Ways  
‘ of doing This, without commanding  
‘ Men to do any Thing, which by the  
‘ Law of Nature He had forbid Them ?  
‘ And, if God designed What He did to  
‘ be a Terror to Others, Would He not  
‘ act after such a signal and supernatural  
‘ Manner, as All should see, It was His  
‘ own Doing ; and, in Order to it, dis-  
‘ tinguish between the Innocent and  
‘ Guilty ?

‘ BESIDES, Were not the *Jews*, con-  
‘ sidering Their Circumstances, upon Their  
‘ Coming out of *Egypt*, the most impro-  
‘ per People to convince the World, That  
‘ They did not act out of private Inte-  
‘ rest, but purely to execute God’s Ven-  
‘ geance upon an idolatrous People ?

‘ WOULD

‘ WOULD God, in such a Case, choose  
‘ a People as prone to Idolatry, as the  
‘ *Canaanites* Themselves?’

SERM.

XVII.

‘ AND, if the *Israelites* had a Divine  
‘ Commission to extirpate the *Canaanites*,  
‘ Ought not the *Canaanites* to have known  
‘ it, to prevent Their resisting Men acting  
‘ by Divine Commission ? Otherwise,  
‘ would there not be Two opposite In-  
‘ terests, at the same Time, a Right in  
‘ the *Jews*, by Revelation, to take away  
‘ the Lives of the *Canaanites*, and a Right  
‘ in the *Canaanites*, by the Law of Na-  
‘ ture, to defend Their Lives ?’

AND then, to shew how inconsistent the  
Scripture-History is with itself, He adds,  
and though it is said, That ‘ *The Lord*  
‘ *God is amongst You, and He will not fail*  
‘ *to drive out the Canaanite before You,*  
‘ yet *Israel* could not drive Them out,  
‘ in several Places. And, in one Instance,  
‘ it is said, *The Lord was with Judah,*  
‘ and He drove out the Inhabitants of the  
‘ *Mountain; but could not drive out the In-*  
‘ *habitants of the Valley, because They had*  
‘ *Chariots of Iron.*’

AND



SERM.

XVII. AND then He concludes with the following Remark, upon the Miracle at *Gibeon*, 'That in the Judgment of some Writers, Both *Jew* and *Christian*, it is not related by the Scripture-Historian as Matter of Fact, but is only a Citation from another Author in the Poetic Kind, with Design to embellish the Narration.'

THIS is the Substance of His Objections, setting aside some few Strictures that are interspersed, with Reference to the Morality of the Action, a Point which I have already considered, and shall, therefore, confine Myself to These, taking Them in the same Order, in which They lie before Us.

IN the first Place, should God be allowed the Right of punishing 'some wicked Nations with Death, to fright Others from committing the same Crimes;' still it is enquired, 'If He has not a Thousand Ways of effecting it, without commanding Men to do any Thing, which, by the Law of Nature, He has forbid Them?'

THIS

THIS Objection has been already con- SERM.  
sidered, so far as the Charge of Immora- XVII.  
lity is concerned ; and, therefore, I need  
only add, at present, That there is no Force  
in this Objection, unless it be shewn, That,  
of these Thousand *other* Ways, there was  
One, that would suit as well *all* those  
good and valuable Ends, that were propo-  
sed by *This*.

AND whereas He adds, ‘ If God de-  
signed What He did to be a Terror  
‘ to Others, Would He not have acted  
‘ after such a signal and supernatural  
‘ Manner, as All should see, It was His  
‘ Doing, and the Reason of His so Do-  
‘ ing ?’

TO THIS I answer, That, should the  
Judgments, which God inflicts upon a  
wicked People, be duly considered by the  
Rest of Mankind, They have a Tendency  
to dehort Them from committing the  
like Crimes, and the more plain the Marks  
of a Divine Interposure, in the Case, so  
much the greater Tendency it has to pro-  
duce this good Effect. But How *far* this  
Method of Instruction shall extend, and  
with what *Degree* of Evidence it shall

SERM. be attended, is a Point which does not  
 XVII. become Us to determine. It must be left  
 to God, who is the sole proper Judge. Nor have We any Room for Complaint; since God has sufficiently provided for Our Instruction *Another* Way, and in such a Way, as, I suppose, no Friend of Natural Religion has yet called in Question, and consequently, though it should be true, That God designed the Punishment of the *Canaanites* to be a Terror to Others, it will not follow from Hence (as Our Objector imagines) That He was obliged to act in such a Way, as that *All* should see, It was His Doing; but only that *Those* should see it to be His Doing, for whose immediate Use this Method of Instruction was designed. Otherwise, it will follow, That God cannot animadvert upon Sin in One Part of the Universe, without being obliged to communicate His Judicial Proceedings to the Whole; which is not true; for much Good may redound to Many, who profit by Another's Suffering; though as Many more should be removed at too great a Distance of Place, or Time, to have heard of it.

How-



HOWEVER, should it be supposed for SERM.  
Once, That God, by His Judicial Proceed- XVII.  
ings with the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites*,  
designed to give a general Alarm from one  
End of the *then* Habitable World to the  
Other; and should it be supposed, That,  
in order to do This, He must, of Course,  
act in such a *signal* and supernatural Way,  
that Mankind in General should have  
Ground to believe it to be from God;  
This being supposed, I would gladly be  
informed, Whether, if this Series of su-  
pernatural Operations were set aside, this  
ingenious Author could have substitut-  
ed a Better in Their Room. Are not  
the Operations, Here related, such as  
bespeak a Power, which had not a Part,  
but the Whole of Nature, so far as it  
falls within Our Cognizance, at its Com-  
mand? Was not the Earth, the Air, and  
Element of Water, add, if You please,  
the Vicissitudes of Day and Night, all list-  
ed into the Service of the present Cause?  
We shall be told Hereafter, That Facts of  
this Kind have too much of the Air of  
Fiction, to be received for true. But, in  
Reply to This, I would observe *Two*  
Y 2 Things:

SERM.  
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Things : *First*, That these Facts were *so circumstanced*, that They could not possibly have been received for true by the Contemporaries of *Moses*, if not really so. And *secondly*, That there will be no End of Controversy, if, after it is allowed, That the most supernatural Manner of Operation is a proper Means, in order to obtain a certain good and important End, that *very Circumstance* of supernatural Operation shall be objected, against the Credibility of the History. For This were in other Words to assert, That a History ought to be rejected, for no better a Reason than This, because it is perfectly consistent with the Reason of Things, and with itself.

BUT to return to Our Author, His *third* Objection is, 'That the *Jews*, considering Their Circumstances upon Coming out of *Egypt*, were the most improper to convince the World, That They did not act out of private Interest, but *purely* to execute God's Vengeance on an idolatrous Nation.' To Which it may be replied, That, as to the Moral Improvement, or Use, which the World

World might make of this Transaction, SERM.  
it was not necessary, in order to that End, XVII.  
for the World to know, whether the *Jews*  
did, or did not, execute Their Commis-  
sion, with this disinterested View.

BUT, in Reality, This Objection is  
grounded on too partial a Conception of  
the Fact; for it is not in the least infi-  
nuated, by the Historian, That it was  
purely to execute God's Vengeance on an  
idolatrous People, that the *Jews* invaded  
the *Canaanites*. The *Jews* went up, to  
take Possession of a Land, which God had  
undertaken to give Them, in Consequence  
of those prior Declarations, which He  
had made, some Generations before, to  
Their Fathers, and, considering the won-  
derful Facts, which Both preceded and  
accompanied the Fulfilment of this Pro-  
mise, it is evident That, let the Spirit of the  
*Jews* have been What it will, the God  
of *Israel* did Enough 'to make known His  
' Power, and to declare His Name in all  
' the Earth.'

AND, as to His Objection from the  
*Proneness* of that People to Idolatry, I  
much wonder so acute a Writer should



SERM. not perceive, How easily that *very Circum-*  
 XVII. *stance* might be turned against Him, since  
 God, for that very Reason, might choose  
 rather to exterminate the *Canaanites* by  
 the Sword of the *Israelites* than by *Other*  
*Means*, were it only to caution *Them* a-  
 gainst Committing the like Crimes: Not  
 to observe, That, had the *Canaanites* been  
 exterminated by those *Other Means*, which  
 this Author suggests, such as Famine or  
 Pestilence, They would no more have as-  
 cribed these Judgments to the God of  
*Israel*, than to Any of the *Heathen Dei-*  
*ties*.

To proceed to the *fifth* Objection, ' If  
 ' the *Israelites*, says He, had a Divine  
 ' Commission to exterminate the *Canaan-*  
 ' *ites*, Ought not the *Canaanites* to have  
 ' known as much, to prevent Their Resist-  
 ' ing Men, acting by Divine Commission?  
 If the Purport of this Question be this,  
 Whether God was obliged to make known  
 this Commission of His to the *Canaanites*,  
 to prevent their Opposing it? I answer,  
 No,—Because God might have good  
 Ends to answer, by not preventing that  
 Opposition; and because an Opposition, *se*  
*circum-*

*circumstanced*, by this Author's Own Confession, would be clear of Sin. But Our Objector fears, That this Absurdity will then follow, That, if the Commission was not made known to the *Canaanites*, We shall have Two opposite Rights at the same Time; a Right in the *Jews*, by Revelation or Divine Commission, to take away the Life of a *Canaanite*, and a Right in the *Canaanite*, by the Law of Nature, to defend His Life.

I MUCH wonder, that a Person of this Writer's Acuteness should not see, That in this Objection there is more of the *Appearance* of Force, than the *Reality*, for the Supposition of Two such Rights, as These, is so far from being inconsistent, that, on the Contrary, in a Moral Estimation, They may with Ease be reconciled. And, I think, this Writer Himself has done it for Us, by observing, That the *Jew*, in Virtue of a Divine Commission, has a Right to take away the Life of a *Canaanite*, when put in His Power, and yet a *Canaanite* has, by the Law of Self-preservation, a Right to stand upon His Own Defence; and, if

SERM. Two such opposite Rights, in this Sense  
 XVII. of the Word, cannot subsist at One and  
 the Same Time, I would gladly be informed, What We shall make of every ordinary Battle, that is fought amongst Ourselves, where Each of the contending Parties has a Right to defend that Life which is opposed?

THE Drift of His *next* Objection is, to fasten the Charge of Inconsistency or Self-Contradiction upon the Scripture-History.

BUT this Surmise may be removed with Ease, provided We allow the Scripture-Historian the same Right in Common with any Other Author, I mean That of Explaining Himself.

AND Here I shall submit Two or Three Passages to Your Consideration, which, in Justice to the Historian, ought not to have been overlooked. *Deut. xi. 22, 23. If Ye shall diligently keep All the Commands, which I command you to do — Then will the Lord drive out All these Nations from before You — Deut. vii. 22. The Lord will put out these Nations by Little and Little; Thou mayest not, or (as it is in the Original)*



nal) *Thou shalt not be able to consume Them at Once, lest the Beasts of the Field increase upon Thee.* You see already, How, SERM.  
XVII.

notwithstanding the Assertion of *Joshua*, That the Lord would not fail to drive out the *Canaanites*, it might still be true, That *Israel* could not drive Them out in several Places: The Promise of God not being absolute, as Our Objector has to prove, in order to make good His Argument, but was given with such Restrictions, as will sufficiently account for the Fact, on which this Objection is grounded: God never having engaged to put the *Jews* in Possession of the whole Country at Once, had the *Jews* obeyed His Commands; much less, that He would not suffer some of the *Canaanites* to remain as *Thorns* in Their Sides, when the *Jews* had violated His express Command, by making League with those very States, which He had charged Them to destroy.

AND whereas Our Objector adds, *That the Lord was with Judah, and He drove out the Inhabitants of the Mountain; but could not drive out the Inhabitants of the Valley, because They had Chariots of Iron,* I must

SERM. must frankly confess that this Proposition,  
 XVII. if understood in Our Objector's Sense, is  
 exceptionable, indeed. And I am at a  
 Loss, which to admire at most, its Im-  
 piety, or Absurdity ; but surely, no One,  
 that has the least Acquaintance with the  
*Jewish* Writers, would expect from Them  
 such a Sentiment as this, That a *Chariot*  
*of Iron* was an Obstacle not to be sur-  
 mounted by the Power of God ; and, in  
 Justice to these Antient Writers, permit  
 Me to observe, That Their Modern Op-  
 posers too often take up with a defective  
 Version, when, it could have been with-  
 ed, They had consulted the Original.

WE find *There* no such Assertion, as  
 though *Judah*, when assisted by God,  
*could not drive out the Inhabitants of the*  
*Valley* ; but only an Elliptical Form of  
 Speech, which Our Translators have fil-  
 led up for Us ; whereas They had much  
 better have left the Reader to do it, and  
 rendered the Proposition Word for Word,  
 as it stands in the Original, *The Lord was*  
*with Judah, and He, i. e. Judah drove*  
*out the Inhabitants of the Mountain* ; but  
*not to drive out the Inhabitants of the*  
*Valley,*

*Valley, because They had Chariots of Iron.* SERM.  
Meaning, That *Judah* did, indeed, drive XVII.  
*out the Inhabitants of the Mountain*, but

\* NOT so, as to carry the War farther, and drive out the *Inhabitants of the Valley*; and then, to assign the Reason of this Omission, on *Judah's* Part, He subjoins, *because They had Chariots of Iron*; which discouraged Him from the Attempt. And, That Our Historian's Design was to intimate as much, I mean, some Defect on *Judah's* Side, and not on God's, appears from the Whole Context; wherein He shews, How greatly defective the Tribes of *Israel* were in executing the Divine Commission, with Reference to the Expulsion of the *Canaanites*; and, in the Beginning of the next Chapter, He introduces an Angel, or Messenger of God, as expostulating the Case with Them, upon that Account.

HIS last Objection relates to the Miracle of the *Sun's Standing still*; If His Design, Here, is to intimate, That What

\* See the like Phraseology in the Original, Amos viii. 4.

has



SERM. has been generally taken for a Matter of  
 XVII. Fact, and related as such by the Historian,  
 was, in Reality, no more than a Poetic  
 Embellishment, borrowed from a Per-  
 former in that Kind ; I have *two* Things  
 to observe, *first*, That, supposing this Re-  
 mark for true, it will only affect this sin-  
 gle Fact ; and We have sufficient Proofs  
 of a Divine Interposure, should This be  
 set aside. Nor will the Fidelity of the  
 Historian suffer, because He, by Supposi-  
 tion, does not relate it as a Fact, but on-  
 ly inserts it by Way of Poetic Embellish-  
 ment, or Figurative Mode of Speech, to  
 imply the great and long Slaughter, which  
*Joshua* made of the *Amorites* in this En-  
 gagement.

BUT, after All, I suspect We have,  
 Here, a fresh Instance of that great Li-  
 berty, which has been taken by Writers  
 on All Sides, with the Sacred Writings.  
 For I think We need only read over the  
 Paragraph to see, That Our Author is  
 very far from laying aside the Historian,  
 tho', as it was a Fact of the most remark-  
 able Kind, He gives it the Reader in as  
 remarkable a Manner ; for He does not  
 con-

content Himself with giving it a bare Nar-  
ration, but, after He has done That, He  
appeals to Another Writer, in its Support;  
and One, that appears, from His Man-  
ner of Expression, to have been of some  
considerable Repute amongst His Coun-  
trymen the Jews. *Then spoke Joshua to*  
*the Lord.* Here is something, You see,  
addressed to God; *Then spoke Joshua to*  
*the Lord, in the Day, when the Lord de-*  
*livered up the Amorite, and He said in the*  
*Sight of the Children of Israel* (it was  
therefore spoken in the Hearing of the  
Jewish Army) *Sun, stand Thou still upon*  
*Gibeon, and Thou, Moon, in the Valley of*  
*Ajalon. And the Sun stood still, and the*  
*Moon stayed, until the People had avenged*  
*Themselves upon Their Enemies.*

SUCH is the Historic Account of the  
Fact, as given by the Historian, and then  
follows that most remarkable Appeal to  
Another Writer: *Is not this writ in the*  
*Book of Jasher? So the Sun stood still in the*  
*Midst of Heaven, and hastened not to go*  
*down, about a whole Day. And there was*  
*no Delay like that, before it, or after it,*  
*that the Lord hearkened to the Voice of*  
*Man,*

SERM.  
XVII.

SERM. *Man,—i. e.* so as to grant so extraordinary  
XVII. a Request.

IF ever any Thing was related in the Historic Form, I think, This is so ; and accordingly You find, both the Prophet *Habakkuk*, and the Son of *Sirach*, insert it amongst other real Miracles, which God wrought upon this Occasion.

As to the Philosophic Difficulties which, Our Objector imagines, would accompany this Miracle, supposing it for true, it could have been wished, He had specified Them, were it only to give Us the Opportunity of fairly examining Them : It is no Wonder if some Writers, whether *Jew* or *Christian*, have attempted to explain away this Miracle, considering what Schemes of Philosophy have prevailed for many Centuries past ; but, if We consider the Fact, in a Moral Estimate, I know of no better Construction to put upon it, than What Our Objector has provided to My Hand, That, if God designed What He did ‘ to be a Terror to Others, ‘ He would act in such a signal and supernatural Way, as that We should see, ‘ It was His Own Doing.’

THUS



THUS have I endeavoured to vindicate SERM.  
this *Part* of the *Mosaic* Constitution, and, XVII.  
as I would be ever desirous to wind up  
the most Controversial Subjects with some  
*Practical* Remarks, I shall beg Leave to  
subjoin, That Whoever compares the Exter-  
mination of the *Canaanites* with those gross  
Impieties and Immoralities, which prevail-  
ed amongst Them, will find Here a Proof,  
in Fact, of God's just Displeasure against  
Sin; and a Proof of such a Kind, as is  
wisely calculated to caution Us, against *Fol-*  
*lowing a Multitude in doing Evil.* Because  
it appears from Hence, That, how much  
Strength and Countenance soever an evil  
Practice may acquire from Numbers, that  
Consideration will avail but little *in the*  
*Day of Wrath:* The Governor of the  
World having it as much in His Power  
to chastise Collective Bodies, as Individu-  
als; and, where it is expedient for the  
general Good, He can as consistently with  
Reason demolish a whole Community, as  
a single Person. — Let Us, therefore,  
be determined by Truth, and not by  
Numbers; let Us remember, That Our  
Duty and Happiness are inviolably con-  
nected.

SERM. neſted. Nor is there a ſtronger Re-in-  
 XVII. forcement to the good Principle than This,  
 { That *the Eye of the Lord is upon the*  
*Righteous*, it is ſo for Their Protection  
 and Defence ; *but the Face of the Lord is*  
*ſet againſt Them that do Evil, to cut off*  
*Their Remembrance from the Earth.*

S E R M.

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# S E R M O N XVIII.

Concerning the *Jewish* Prophets.

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I T H E S S A L. 5. 20.

*Despise not Prophecys.*

**I**F there is, in Reality, that All-per-SERM.  
fect Governor of the Universe, which XVIII.  
Reason demonstrates, and Revelati-  
on confirms, He will have the Good of  
His Subjects at Heart, and omit Nothing  
that is necessary to it.

BUT, tho' the End proposed is still the  
same, the Means, or Measures advanced  
for its Accomplishment, may sometimes  
vary. And, if We ought to revere the  
Divine Dispensations under every Form by  
the same Rule, that We preserve a due  
Regard for Natural Religion, We should  
*not despise*, but estimate aright those *Addi-*  
Z*tional*



SERM. tional Helps, which are communicated to XVIII. Us by Revelation.

IT had been no easy Matter for Us, at this Distance of Time, to assign the Reason, Why the Persons, to whom the Apostle writes, should be in Danger of *undervaluing* the Gift of *Prophecy*, had not the Apostle explained Himself upon this Point in Another Part of His Writings.

IN His *first Epistle* to the *Corinthians*, He gives Us to understand, That by *Prophecy* He means that *particular* Kind of *spiritual Gifts*, which consisted, not barely in the Capacity of *foretelling* future Events, but in *speaking* to the general Edification, in Their Religious Assemblies; a Gift, or Talent, which, in the Apostle's Judgment, was of a far more excellent Kind, than That of *speaking in different Tongues*; tho' some Persons, to whom He wrote, appear to have preferred the Latter: I suppose, because it carried with it a greater Shew of preternatural Power.

‘ He, that speaketh in an unknown Tongue,  
 ‘ speaketh not to Men, but to God: For  
 ‘ no Man understands Him; but He, that  
 ‘ prophesieth, speaketh to Men, to Edifica-  
 ‘ tion,

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'tion, and Exhortation, and Comfort ; He, SERM.  
'that speaketh in an unknown Tongue, edi- XVIII.  
'fies Himself ; but He, that prophesieth,  
'edifies the Church.'

UPON this truly just and rational Principle, He advises Them, indeed, to cultivate a due Esteem for *spiritual Gifts* in General, but to pay the *greatest* Deference to those Gifts, which are of the most *extensive* Usefulness, and, as such, the best in Kind.

AND now, should We compare St. Paul's Description of this particular Gift, with the Writings of the *Jewish Prophets*, it will appear, That His Definition of it is calculated as well for *Their* Times, as for *His Own*.

THE *Jewish Prophets* were Men raised up by God, not, barely, to work a Miracle, or publish a *Prediction* ; but as so many *Preachers of Righteousness*, and *Reformers* of the Age ; to protest against the Sins and Vices of Their Contemporaries, and inculcate the true Sanctity and Virtue upon Mankind.

WHEREFORE, taking the Gift of *Prophecy* in this extensive Sense, I propose, in

SERM. *the first Place*, to assign the Reasons, Why  
 XVIII. We ought to set some Value upon it.

And, *secondly*, as, it must be confessed, a Subject of this Nature has its Difficulties, I shall endeavour, if not wholly to remove, at least to lessen the Same, by considering the most material Objections raised against it.

*IN the first Place*, to assign the Reasons, Why We ought to set a Value upon it.

IN the Search of Truth, tho' a Quickness of Thought has its Use, yet *mature* Consideration has a Greater; for Want of which, whilst endeavouring to decline One Extream, We are too often betrayed into Another.

HENCE it is, that One Man, to avoid the *Infidel*, becomes an *Enthusiast*, and sacrifices All that goes by the Name of good Sense and Reason to His Own honest, but misguided, Zeal for Revelation: Whilst Another, by the like over-acted Zeal for Natural Religion, gives up Revealed, and, finding there have been some false Pretensions to *Prophecy* or *Miracle*, He is so disgusted at the Thought of the  
*adulterate*



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*adulterate* Metal, as to part with the true SERM.  
and *solid* Gold. Thus We have known XVIII.  
the true Wisdom and Literature of *E-*  
*gypt* confounded with its Magic Arts;  
and, because the Founder of the *Jewish*  
Dispensation was educated in the One,  
it has been too hastily presumed, That  
He derived His *Prophetic* Gifts and Ta-  
lents from the Other. Not considering,  
That God has Ways to impart more  
Knowledge to Us, than We can acquire  
by the bare Use of Our Natural Faculties,  
and That Things *may* possibly be so cir-  
cumstanced, as may render it suitable both  
to His Goodness and Wisdom, thus to  
interpose for the Support of Truth.

THAT important Cause, I am per-  
suaded, in the Judgment of All wise and  
considerate Men, will *deserve* as Much.  
It is no trivial or indifferent Matter, when  
the Contest lies between the true Divini-  
ty and the false. And surely, it were no  
Derogation from the Human Understand-  
ing, tho' stocked with the largest Fund  
of Knowledge, to leave it with the Su-  
preme Wisdom to determine, at what  
Z 3 Times,

SERM. Times, and in what Way, it shall inter-  
XVIII. pose, in an Affair not unworthy of itself.

I WOULD not willingly commit that Mistake of considering the Subject in too *partial* a Light, and, therefore, instead of confining Ourselves to such Reflexions, as are suited *only* to particular Periods and Dispensations, I must again propose it to be considered in *General*, Whether, if God from the *Beginning* has thought fit to favour Mankind with some *Additional* Helps, besides the bare Light of Nature, any Contradiction will follow from it? And, as to these *Prophecies* which relate to the *Messiah* in Particular, Must it not be allowed to be a great *Inforcement* to the Cause of Truth, to find the Governor of the World, not only actually interposing for its Support, upon particular Emergencies, but also communicating to Us His fixed Design to make it, in Process of Time, victorious over *all* Opposition? Whether We consider the Scripture-*Predictions* of Our Saviour's *first* or *second* Descent in this Light, or rather regard Him, under Both, as a Person marked out to execute those Promises, which the Father of

of the Universe had made, in Behalf of SERM.  
Truth and Virtue, in Either Case, Every XVIII.  
Well-wisher to that Sacred Cause will find  
His *Advantage* in this Divine Discovery.  
The Hope and Expectation of a Person,  
*so* described, must, from the *Nature* of  
the Thing, yield a new Motive and En-  
couragement to the Virtuous Practice; it  
must so, at *all* Times; but especially in  
*those* Times, when the Interest of Religi-  
on runs low in the World, and its genuine  
Professors are greatly discouraged, as well  
by the Growth of Vice and Error in O-  
thers, as by that Reproach, and Persecu-  
tion, which Their Own Integrity draws  
upon Themselves.

To illustrate This, We need only sup-  
pose Ourselves in the same Situation with  
Our Predecessors in the Faith, at the  
Time, when Idolatry had now got Foot-  
ing in almost every Nation under Heaven,  
and We shall immediately feel the Force  
and Spirit, that breathes in such Lines as  
these: *God be merciful to Us, and bless Us,  
and cause His Face to shine upon Us, to  
make known Thy Way in the Earth, Thy  
saving Health among all Nations.* And



SERM. again, *It is a light Thing, that Thou*  
 XVII. *shouldest be My Servant to raise up the*  
*Tribes of Jacob, and restore the Preser-*  
*ved of Israel, I also will give Thee to be*  
*a Light to the Gentiles, and My Salva-*  
*tion to the Ends of the Earth.*

IF it is a Point of Wisdom to make the same Mean subservient to more Ends than One, We find this Truth most fully verified in the Case before Us : God by One and the same Mean, I mean, that Ancient Discovery which He made of His Design to raise up some great Deliverer, in Support of Truth and Virtue, did, at Once, provide for the Edification of former Ages, and of Ours.

THEY, who lived before the Appearance of this promised Saviour (especially when cast upon the Times of some general Apostasy) might derive no small Encouragement from this Prospect of a future Reformation. And, on the Other Hand, We, who are more immediately interested in that Reformation itself, find Our Faith not a *little confirmed*, by comparing these Historic Facts, with the foregoing *Predictions* concerning Them.

BUT

BUT this Argument will come with SERM.  
still greater Force, if Both They and We XVIII.  
should appear to have one *joint Interest* in  
the Person foretold; in plain Terms, should  
This Person be regarded, as raised up  
by God, for the *Common* Good of Man-  
kind, and the Benefits of His Admini-  
stration be of so Catholic and Extensive  
a Kind, as to take in All Good Men in  
All Ages of the World.

THO', after All, it should be remem-  
bered, That the End of *Prophecy* is not,  
barely, to turn Our Thoughts upon some  
future *Event*, but to convey a present  
Instruction. Such is the Apostle's Re-  
presentation of it, and, to shew how con-  
sistent He is with Himself, He gives  
the *Prophetic* Title to a *Cretan* Poet, I  
suppose, for no Other Reason beside  
This, That He painted the Vices of His  
Cotemporaries in Their proper Colours,  
and so answered that Part of the *Pro-  
phetic* Office, which consists in bearing a  
Protest against the Sins and Follies of the  
Age.

UPON

SERM.  
XVIII.

UPON the Whole, if *Prophecy* or Revelation, in general, is thrown in by Way of Inforcement to Natural Religion, Whoever would do Justice to the Scripture-*Prophecies*, should enquire, How far They have any Reference or Subserviency to this End, I mean, the Inforcement of true Religion and Virtue, which, like the chief Design in some well-wrought Drama, should be kept in View, whilst the different *Prophecies*, or Revelations, that occur in Scripture, should, like so many masterly Episodes, have either an immediate, or more remote, Connexion with it. In this Situation of Things, to use the Words of a late Noble Author, *Christianity* itself ' may be, in Reality, but ' One single Link in the Chain of Truth, ' that consists of several Others ;' and, if I may be allowed to improve on so just a Thought, What *Enoch*, *Noah*, and all the *Prophets* of God have been in a lower Sphere, That has the Son of God incarnate already been in a *Greater*, according to that *Prophetic* Declaration, *Behold I have given Him for a Witness to the*  
*Peo-*



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People, a Leader and Commander to the People; Behold, Thou shalt call a Nation, that Thou knowest not, and Nations, that knew not Thee, shall run after Thee, because of the Lord Thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified Thee. SERM.  
XVIII.

HAVING assigned some Reasons, Why the Gift of *Prophecy* should not be despised, I come now, in the second Place, to obviate certain Objections which may be raised against it.

AND Here, after having enquired, if there be not *some* Concessions, that should in Reason be made on all Sides, with Reference to the Errors of *Transcribers*, and *Translators*; add (if there be any such) Mistakes in Point of *History*, *Philosophy*, or any *other* Thing, that does not affect *Prophecy* itself, still it will be objected, That it is no easy Matter to reconcile some of these *Prophecies* with the Freedom of Moral Agents. It will be said, for Instance, How could the *Messiah's* Rejection by His Own Countrymen, the *Jews*, or the ensuing Dissolution of the *Jewish*

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SERM. *ish* Polity, be *foretold*, if neither *Jews*  
 XVIII. nor *Romans* (by Supposition) were dis-  
 possessed of Their Native Liberty, but had  
 it in Their Own Power and Option,  
 whether to act or refrain?

BUT, in Reply to This, it should be  
 observed, That well-attested Facts are  
 Things of too *stubborn* a Kind to be over-  
 ruled by Human Ignorance; and, should  
 Authentic Accounts of History appear,  
 That these Events were *predicted*, whether  
 by *Christ* Himself, or by any Other Mes-  
 senger of God, it is not Our Inability to  
 account for the *Prediction*, that will be  
 a sufficient Ground for rejecting it.

I CONFESS there is a Difficulty Here;  
 tho' surely, if We allow God to be a  
 Being possessed of all Perfections, He must  
 have *This* among the Rest, I mean, the  
 Capacity or Power to form an unerring  
 Judgment, concerning the future Con-  
 duct of Other Agents; and What God  
 (in the *Sense* assigned) foresees Himself,  
 He must be able (so far as the present  
 Case is concerned) to communicate to A-  
 nother. If amongst Ourselves We find,  
 That

That a wise and considerate Man is able to form *some Judgment* before-hand, How Another will act, We must surely allow a Capacity or Power of the same Kind, tho' in a *greater Degree*, to Beings of a higher Order, and in the *greatest Degree* of All to God; such as may be a sufficient Ground for the Scripture-*Prediction*, though this Judgment (how infallible soever) should not fall under the same Class, or Kind, with that Consciousness, or Knowledge, which God has of such Things, as *actually* exist. I know *some specious Things* have been offered from the Nature of Truth, and Free-Agency, to the Contrary, but, after All, the Difficulty does not lie wholly on *one Side* of the Question; and I will venture to say, that, Whoever opposes either the Nature of Truth, or Free-Agency, to this *Divine Perfection*, will (if He attends to the necessary Consequence of His Own Reasoning) find it proves *too Much*; He will find Himself reduced to this unhappy Dilemma, either of retracting His Own Argument, as in-

con-



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SERM. conclusive, or, if standing by it, to main-  
 XVIII. tain this Absurdity along with it, That,  
 should God have made a Promise, it is  
 not a *Truth*, to affirm, That He *will*  
 perform it, or That God cannot fore-  
 see that *His Own* Decrees will come to  
 pass, without *ceasing* to be a Free-Agent  
 in the Accomplishment of them.

S E R M.

A

## S E R M O N XIX.

Some Directions for the Study of  
the *Prophetic* Writings.

2 P E T E R i. 20, 21.

*Knowing This first, that no Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation. For the Prophecy came not in old Times, by the Will of Man; but holy Men of God spake, as They were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

**A**FTER the Intrinsic Worth and SERM.  
XIX.  
Excellence of Our Saviour's Doctrine, there is no greater Proof of its Importance, Both to the Glory of God, and the Good of Men, than those *Prophetic* Declarations, and Miraculous Works,

SERM. Works, which did either precede or accompany its Introduction into the World.  
 XIX. For which Reason, whenever We treat, either of Scripture-Miracles or Scripture-Prophecies, no Friend of *Christianity* should regard these Subjects with an Eye of Indifference; on the Contrary, if embarked in Earnest, in that Sacred Cause, He should revere *Whatever* Steps and Measures the Supreme Wisdom has advanced in its Support.

IN this View I consider St. *Peter's* Reasoning in the Context, *We have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known to You the Power and Coming of the Lord Jesus; but were Eye-Witnesses of His Majesty, when He received from God the Father Honour and Glory, when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent Glory* (alluding, I suppose, to *that* Glory which belongs to the first Cause and Father of the Universe, the Fountain of Being, and Fountain of Power) *when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; and this Voice We heard* (for St. *Peter* lays down no Fable, Fiction,  
 on,



on, or Coinage of the Human Brain, but SERM.  
 real Historical Truth) and *this Voice We* XIX.  
*heard, when We were with Him in the*  
*holy Mount.* But Facts, it may be said,  
 (how well soever attested) are Things of  
 a *transient* Kind, nor can it in Reason be  
 expected, That such glorious and celestial  
 Scenes should be frequently repeated, and  
 therefore the Apostle adds, *We have also*  
*a more sure* (a more firm, stable, or per-  
 manent) *Word of Prophecy, i. e.* no short  
 and transient, but *standing* Monument and  
 Means of Instruction and Confirmation,  
*i. e.* the *Prophetic Word*. It was so in  
 the Apostle's Days, and may continue to  
 subserve the same good and excellent Use  
 till the *latest* Point of Time. And, there-  
 fore, He adds, *To which Ye do well to at-*  
*tend, as to a Light* (or Lamp) *shining in a*  
*dark Place, until the Day dawn, &c.*

AND then follow the Words of the  
 Text, *Knowing This first, that no Pro-*  
*phesy of Scripture is of any private In-*  
*terpretation,* or (as some learned Men ob-  
 serve, the Words might be rendered more  
 agreeable to the Original) *All Prophecy*  
*of Scripture, i. e.* All the *Prophetic Part*

SERM. of Scripture, so called, I suppose, in Contradistinction to the Rest, *All Prophecy of*  
 XIX. *Scripture does not come into Being*, in Consequence of a Man's *own private* Effort, or Start of Mind. For the Term Here used (as the Learned observe) may allude to the Letting loose of the Racers from that Place, where the Race begins. And it is well known, that the true *Prophet* does not set out or run of *His Own Head*, but, on the Contrary, acts only by Impulse, or Commission from a Higher Power.

AND so the Apostle explains the Sentiment more at large in what follows: *For Prophecy came not of old Time by the Will of Man* (for *Prophecy*, from the Nature of the Thing, was never delivered or produced by the Will of Man) *but holy Men of God spoke, as They were moved* (or carried) *by the Holy Ghost*. My Design, in the following Pages, being to facilitate Your Acquaintance with so noble and useful a Part of Scripture, I shall lay out the ensuing Discourse in considering the *peculiar* Genius, Quality, or Nature of the *Prophetic* Writing, with that additional

ditional Light which is thrown upon it, by the *Christian* Dispensation.

SERM.

XIX.

WHOEVER would come at Truth, let the Subject of Enquiry be of whatever Kind, He must not amuse Himself with mere Words and Sounds, but examine carefully the *Natures* of Things, and enquire Wherein They *agree*, and Wherein They *differ*; What Properties They have in *Common* with Others, and what Things *peculiar* to Themselves.

THUS, in the Case before Us, a Writer of the *Prophetic* Kind may, indeed, have some Things in *Common* with other Authors. But (if His Pretensions to the *Prophetic* Character be just and true) it may very reasonably be expected that He should have some Things *peculiar* to Himself. It may so, from the very *Nature* of the Thing; because, by Supposition, He writes under the Conduct of some superior Power, or invisible Agent, whose Sense He conveys to Us, and not barely His Own.

As therefore this Writer differs in Kind, He cannot in Reason be brought under all the same Rules with Other Au-



SERM. thors, no more than, in Human Compo-  
 XIX. sures, a Writer, in the Epic or Dramatic  
 Kind, must be tried by the same Rules  
 and Standard with Another who per-  
 forms in Ode, Elegy, or Satyr. God is  
 a Being that has a far greater Reach of  
 Thought than the Wisest of Men. His  
 Schemes and Counsels, His Forecast and  
 Penetration, are not calculated only for  
 a few Months or Years, but are capable  
 of stretching to the remotest Distance of  
 Time. Upon *this* Principle (which has its  
 Foundation in the Nature and Reason of  
 Things) I would build the following Re-  
 marks: *In the first Place*, That Being  
 who surveys, in one large and *united* View,  
 such distant Events, can *connect* the Same,  
 in the Account or Description of Them,  
 which He thinks fit to communicate to  
 Another.

THUS a *Prophet* of God, from some  
 Deliverance of a *lower* Kind, which He  
 is *predicting* with Reference to the *Jew-  
 ish* Church, may be rapt by the *Prophetic*  
 Spirit, into the Consideration of some  
*greater* Revolution, of which the Former  
 was no more than a faint Resemblance.

And,

And, by the same Rule, a Paragraph, SERM.  
XIX.  
that begins with the Account of Our Sa-

vour's Mission, and the subsequent Conversion of the *Gentile* World, may (before its Close) oblige Us to *extend* Our Thoughts to those blessed Days, when true *Christianity* shall, after a long *Apostasy*, be revived, or, when the *Jews* (after as long an *Exile*) shall be restored. We have a most remarkable Instance of Both these *Prophetic* Sallies in the *xth* and *xith* Chapters of *Isaiah*, where the *Prophet* takes Occasion, from the Destruction of *Senacherib's* Army, to *predict* the Rise of the *Messiah's* Kingdom; and, having compared the former Event to the *Hewing down the lofty Cedars of Lebanon*, He compares the Latter, for the *Minuteness* of its Original, to a small *Twig* or *Sucker*, that should grow out of the *Root of Jesse*, the House of *Jesse*, or *David*, being reduced to the lowest *Ebb* at the Time of Our Saviour's Appearance. *The Lord* (says He) *shall lop the Bough with Terror, and the High Ones of Stature shall be hewn down, and the Haughty shall be humbled; and He shall cut down the Thickets*

SERM. of the Forest with Iron, and Lebanon shall  
 XIX. fall by a Mighty One. And there shall  
 { come a Rod, or Twig, out of the Stem of  
 Jesse, and a Branch shall grow ou of  
 His Roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall  
 rest upon Him, the Spirit of Wisdom and  
 Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and  
 Might, the Spirit of Knowledge, and of  
 the Fear of the Lord, and shall make Him  
 of quick Understanding in the Fear of the  
 Lord; with Righteousness shall He judge the  
 Poor, and reprove with Equity for the Meek  
 of the Earth; and He shall smite the Earth  
 with the Rod of His Mouth, and with the  
 Breath of His Lips shall He slay the Wick-  
 ed. And then, after having described the  
 mild and pacific Influence of our Saviour's  
 Government, with the Progress of His  
 Cause amongst the Gentile World, He adds,  
*And it shall come to pass in that Day* (or  
 Dispensation, for such is the Import of  
 the Word Day in Scripture) *That the Lord*  
*shall set His Hand again the second Time,*  
*to recover the Remnant of His People, which*  
*shall be left from Assyria, and from E-*  
*gypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush,*  
*and from Elam, and from the Isles of the*  
*Sea* (meaning these Western Parts of the  
 Earth)



Earth) and He shall set up an Ensign for SERM.  
the Nations, and shall assemble the Outcasts XIX.  
of Israel, and gather together the Dispersed  
of Judah, from the four Corners of the  
Earth. And, I will plant Them (as an-  
other Prophet expresses it) in Their Own  
Land, and They shall no more be pulled up  
out of Their Land which I have given  
Them, saith the Lord Thy God.

AGAIN, Secondly, It is a Point of Wis-  
dom to make One and the Same Means  
subserving to several good and valuable  
Ends. And, therefore (considering God's  
Reach of Thought) He may, for any  
Thing in Reason to the Contrary, have  
designed some of those Antient Rites,  
Customs, and Institutions (which He en-  
joined the Jews, by Way of Fence against  
the growing Idolatry of the Times) for  
this further Use of being so many Emble-  
matic Representations of Gospel Truths.  
Thus the Law of Moses, though given at  
so great a Distance of Time, may con-  
tain (as St. Paul observes) the Shadow of  
good Things to come. And thus the most  
retired Part of the Jewish Sanctuary might  
be intended for a Type of Heaven;  
A a 4 whilst

SERM. whilst the Atonement, There made once  
 XIX. a Year by the *Jewish* High Priest with  
 the Blood of His Sacrifice, *might* be de-  
 signed to adumbrate a far greater and  
 more extensive Benefit, which the *Media-*  
*tor of the New Covenant*, and the great  
*High Priest of Our Profession*, should ad-  
 minister, by that Grant of Power, which  
 He has received in Reward of His O-  
 bedience unto Death.

THUS St. Paul *might* design Something  
 more than a bare Allusion, when He said,  
*Christ Our Passover was slain for Us.*  
 And Another Apostle, when relating a  
 most remarkable Circumstance which ac-  
 companied Our Saviour's Sufferings, might  
 as justly observe, *That Scripture to be ful-*  
*filled*, which says, *A Bone of Him shall*  
*not be broken.* Nor will it be at all *necef-*  
*sary* to the present Argument to suppose,  
 That either *Moses* Himself, or any of His  
 Contemporaries were able to dive so deep  
 into God's Intention; because these An-  
 tient Institutions had *Another* Use with  
 Regard to Them, though *This* Use should  
 be wanting; and because (from the Na-  
 ture of the Thing) when treating of the  
 Pro-

Prophetic Character or Writings, it is not SERM.  
the Human Penetration or Reach of XIX.

Thought that We are obliged to consider, but *the Divine*. Upon the Whole, All, that is required to the present Argument, is to conceive aright of God; and to allow to the Supreme Wisdom and Understanding a greater Extent of Thought than Our Twn.

UPON the same Principles it might be observed still farther, *Thirldy*, That, considering God's Reach of Thought, an antient *Prediction*, that was expressed in general Terms, may admit of a particular Application; it may so, either by some after *Prophecies* which are more determined, or by the Event itself.

To instance in that Antient Promise given to the Patriarch *Abraham*, *In Thy Seed shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed.*

As the Term, Here used, may be understood either in the *Single* or *Collective* Sense, I must freely confess, That no more can be *proved* from it, but that the Posterity of *Abraham* should be a Common Blessing to Mankind; and, consequently, it must



SERM. must be left to some after *Prophecies*,  
 XIX. or to the Event itself, to determine What  
 Kind of Blessing was intended, and Whether this Promise should be accomplished by a Part of His Posterity, or by the Whole.

Now should it appear in Process of Time, That the Posterity of *Abraham* had the Honour of preserving the true Religion amongst Them, at the Time when the far greater Part of Men were over-run with Idolatry, I should think any wise and considerate Man would conjecture, at least, from this *Prediction*, That, if a general Reformation should ever take Place, this People would have the Honour of being the Instruments of God in the Work, though, as yet, He could not determine either from the Words of the *Prophecy* itself, or from the embarrassed Appearance of Things, at what Time, or in what Way, it should be accomplished. And should the same wise and considerate Person be supposed alive, at the Time when the Apostles of Our Lord (who were *Jews* by Birth) received that Commission from Him, *Go teach or disciple all Nations*

Nations— And should observe, How, in- SERM.  
Consequence of this Commission, the XIX.  
Truth spread (like the Rise of Day) from  
One Country to Another, That the Eyes  
of Men *were opened*, and innumerable  
Multitudes awaking from the long Sleep  
of Error, and bursting the Shackles of E-  
ducation, Custom, and prejudicate Opini-  
ons, *turned from Idols to serve the living and*  
*true God*, surely, Whoever in sober Se-  
riousness should compare the Original En-  
gagement or Promise, made to *Abraham*,  
with the Event would confess, That, so  
far *at least*, it was *Here* made good, and  
would judge, that St. *Paul* had Reason to  
observe of the great Founder of Our Re-  
ligion, That by His Means *the Blessing of*  
*Abraham came upon the Gentiles*. It might,  
therefore, with Reason be inferred, That  
this *Prophecy* was given with Reference  
to *Christ*; it might so, upon the Credit  
of this *single* Event. How much more,  
should it appear from some after Dis-  
covery of the Will of God, That He  
designed the same Descendant of *Abra-*  
*ham* for a still *more* extensive Benefit, such  
as should include, not Two or Three Ge-  
nerations,

SERM. generations, but All the Good and Virtuous  
 XIX. in All Ages of the World.

*IN the last Place*, as God might have a View to Our Instruction, and Good, by those Antient Types and *Prophecies*; so He may not have *left* it intirely to Us, to secure that End, by Our comparing Them with Their correspondent Events; but, in order to facilitate the End proposed, He *may*, in many Instances, have pointed out That Correspondence to the first Preachers of *Christianity*, by His Spirit; and, if so, it will follow, That the Latter, *so circumstanced*, may be allowed for good and well qualified Expounders of the Former; otherwise, we deny to God, or the Spirit of God, a Liberty common to all other Beings, I mean That of explaining His Own Meaning. I would not be thought, by this Remark, to deny, but That *some* Antient *Prophecies*, with Reference to *Christ*, are so plain and expers, that They carry Their Own Explanation along with Them, and cannot fairly be applied to any other Person or Event.

ALL



ALL I intend is This, That, should there be *some* Passages not so express, and consequently of which it can only be said; That They possibly *may* have been designed of Him, even Here the actual Application of Them, by Our Lord Himself, or by any Person that spoke by His Spirit (supposing Their Commission proved) will afford sufficient Ground to believe, That They were in Fact designed of Him. Nor would I be thought, by this Remark, to preclude the Right of *Private* Judgment; for, as We are commanded to *try the Spirits*, so We have a Right to compare both the Type or *Prophecy* with its correspondent Event, and see with *Our Own* Eyes, whether there is a just Resemblance and Agreement, or whether the Sense asserted be too forced and far fetched, to be admitted. Thus St. Peter, in His first Sermon after the Descent of the Holy Ghost, considering at once Both *the Sufferings of Christ and the Glory that should follow*, expressed Himself as follows:

HIM, being delivered by the determined Counsel of God, Ye have taken, and by wicked

SERM.

XIX.

SERM. ed Hands have crucified, &c. Whom God  
 XIX. raised up, having loosed the Pains (or Bands)  
 of Death, because it was not possible, He  
 should be holden by it ; for David speaketh  
 concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always  
 before My Face, for He is at My Right  
 Hand, that I should not be moved : There-  
 fore did My Heart rejoice, and My Tongue  
 was glad ; moreover also, My Flesh shall rest  
 in Hope, for Thou wilt not leave My Soul  
 in Hades, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Ho-  
 ly One to see Corruption. Thou hast made  
 known to Me the Way of Life. Here is  
 an Apostolical Application of this Prophe-  
 cy to Our Jesus. But to shew, That He  
 never intended to preclude the Liberty of  
 Private Judgment, He adds, Men and Bre-  
 thren, let me freely speak to You of the  
 Patriarch David, That He is Both dead  
 and buried, and His Sepulchre is with Us  
 to this Day. Therefore being a Propbet,  
 and knowing that God had sworn, that of  
 the Fruit of His Loins, according to the  
 Flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit upon  
 His Throne, He, seeing this before, spake  
 of the Resurrection of Christ, That His  
 Soul was not left in Hades, &c. And a-  
 gain,

gain, having observed, That *This Jesus* had God raised up, He adds, for *David* is not ascended into Heaven, but He saith Himself, *The Lord said to My Lord, Sit Thou on My Right Hand, until I make Thine Enemies Thy Foot-Stool.* And, Therefore let *All the House of Israel* know, that God has made the same *Jesus*, whom Ye crucified, Both Lord and Christ.

I AM not willing to dismiss the Subject, without observing some Things, in the last Place, concerning the Prophetic Style. This, in many Instances, is of the same plain and simple Kind, with other Parts of Scripture. And, when the Figurative or Emblematical Use is introduced, it is generally so circumstanced, that either the *Connexion* will explain it, or the Figures and Emblems Themselves are so well suited to the Things represented by Them, that Their Meaning is obvious enough to the attentive and considerate Reader. To instance in a few Particulars: As the Relation, which God bears to a Church or People professing the true Religion, is compared, in Scripture, to That of a *Husband* and *Wife*, for  
this



SERM. this Reason, when any Church or People  
 XIX. revolts from the Worship of God, or intermixes the Same with Idolatry, then the same Church or People, so circumstanced, is styled *an Adulteress*, or *Harlot*; and, consequently, Her *Lovers* are either Her Idols, or those idolatrous States whose Alliance and Protection is courted by Her.

AGAIN, if it is a well known Fact in History, That the greatest Empires have been raised upon the Ruins of other States, This shews the Propriety of those *Prophetic* Visions, in which those Empires arise to the *Prophetic* View, under the Form of so many Beasts of Prey; each of which has those *peculiar* Marks belonging to it, as sufficiently distinguish it from the Rest.

AGAIN, the Sound of a *Trumpet*, by no forced and unnatural Figure of Speech, signifies the Approach of Wars, and, for the same Reason, *Storms*, *Tempests*, *Hurricanes*, and *Overflows* of Countries by some large and general Inundation of Waters; above All, the Waste, made by *Locusts*, is made to represent the Devastation made by some Hostile Invasion.

AND

AND, as the Anger and judicial Proceedings of God are frequently compared in Scripture to *Fire*, so, if His Anger proceed to the *total* Destruction of any People, it is styled by the *Prophets* a *Fire that cannot be quenched*. And accordingly, when One of the *Prophets* represents the *total* Ruin of *Idumea*, all the *Sands* of the Country are represented (in the bold *Oriental* Style) as converted into so much *Sulphur*, and all its *Streams* and *Rivulets* into *Pitch*, and the Whole being set on *Fire* is described as one *General* Scene of *Conflagration*; and, to preclude all Expectation of any after Restoration or Recovery, it is said, *The Smoak thereof shall ascend for Ever and Ever*.

I MIGHT carry these Remarks still farther. But this *Specimen* is sufficient to shew, That it is not an Affectation of Obscurity (as Some weakly enough imagine) that gave Occasion to these Figurative Modes of Speech; since, how loose and undetermined soever They may appear, Whoever will be at the Pains to consult the Places, in which They occur, will find Their Meaning sufficiently determin-

SERM. ed, either by the Context alone, or by That  
 XIX. *compared* with the just Resemblance which  
 there is between the Figure, and the Thing  
 prefigured by it. Having thus considered  
 the Nature of the *Prophetic* Writings, let  
 Me (with St. *Peter*) recommend it to  
 Your most careful Study and Perusal. *We*  
*have* (says the Apostle) *a more sure* (or  
*stable*) of *Prophecy*, *to which Ye do well to*  
*attend*. We should do so, were it only in  
 Duty to God Himself. How much more,  
 if this Practice will redound to Our Own  
 Advantage.

WE are apt to envy those happy Co-  
 temporaries of Our Lord, who sat under  
 so *excellent* a Ministry, and were Eye-  
 Witnesses of those Wonderful Works, by  
 which His Doctrine was supported: Not  
 considering, That, how much soever They  
 had the Advantage of Us, in *One* Branch  
 of Evidence, not so, in some Others; for,  
 if *Prophecy* fulfilled be itself a *Miracle*  
*under another Form*, We, that are cast on  
 those latter Times, can produce Many a  
 Scripture *Prophecy* as now fulfilled, *i. e.*  
 Many a *fresh Miracle*, or Divine Attestation  
 to the Truth of *Christianity*, of which  
 Our



Our Lord's Cotemporaries were absolute-  
ly destitute. A Consideration which, if  
it does not intirely ballance those Advan-  
tages peculiar to Them, does at least *lessen*  
the Difference between Them and Us.  
And, if I may be allowed to push this  
Remark somewhat farther, since *Some* of  
the Scripture *Prophecies* remains still to be  
accomplished, it is not impossible, but those  
Generations, which are removed at a still  
*greater* Distance from Our Saviour's Age,  
will not want for *new* Proofs of His Mis-  
sion; and These too, of so clear and won-  
derful a Kind, as will sufficiently ballance  
the Advantage which We have over  
Them, in Point of *Time*.

To give One or Two Instances out of  
Many, it must have been a great Confir-  
mation to the Faith of Our Saviour's Co-  
temporaries, to see the *Jewish* Polity and  
Temple demolished, in *Consequence* of His  
*Prediction*, before that Generation of Men  
*went off the Stage*. And We are conscious  
to the Accomplishing of a far more strange  
and wonderful *Prediction*, in that *Anticri-  
stian* Power, which has since been erected,  
and reigned, for so great a Length of Time,

SERM. within the Pale of the *Christian* Profession.

XIX. But Whoever shall behold the *Dissolution* that Power, and the *Restoration* of the *Jews* (after so many Ages) to Their Own Land, will be conscious to Facts that surpass Them Both.

THUS, the Evidence of *Christianity* is of the *growing* Kind ; and that very Remark, which was made upon *the Path of the Righteous*, may, with equal Justice, be applied to the *Christian Cause* : *It is like a shining Light, that shines more and more, until the perfect Day.*—

S E R M.

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## S E R M O N    X X .

Against *Hypotheses* in Religion.

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PROV. XXX. 6.

*Add Thou not to His Words.*

I N all Arts and Sciences, though a SERM.  
 Genius be the Chief, yet Rule, and XX.  
 Culture have Their Use ; and, if by   
 Chance, a false Taste should be introduced,  
 there is so much the greater Need to rectify  
 the Mistake, and supply the Judgment with  
 certain Marks, or Criterions, by which  
 it may distinguish between What is just  
 and excellent in the Kind. But this Pre-  
 caution is *no Where* more requisite than in  
 Matters of Religion : Because Here We  
 find in Fact, That Men are most in Dan-  
 ger of being misled ; it is Here, that a Bi-  
 as so often interposes ; it is Here, that  
 the Prejudice of Education, or Force of  
 B b 3                      Custom,



SERM. Custom, arms and fortifies the Breast a-  
 XX. gainst the Truth, though supported by the  
 strongest Evidence; whilst the opposite  
 Error is frequently allied to Our worldly  
 Interest and Reputation; the Tyes, that  
 so much endear it to Us, that set Our  
 Thoughts at Work in its Defence, and  
 put Us upon many a Shift and Subter-  
 fuge, rather than come under the double  
 Mortification, *first*, of confessing, That  
 We have been in a Mistake; and, *second-*  
*ly*, the confessing it upon such hard Terms,  
 as will endanger Our temporal Repose and  
 Welfare.

So many Temptations there are to vi-  
 olate the Rule of the Text, *Add Thou not*  
*to His Words.*

I WOULD not be misunderstood, I  
 would not be thought to insinuate, as tho'  
 every Liberty of this Kind must be impu-  
 ted to some *criminal* Principle, or *sinister*  
 Design. The Laws of Charity forbid the  
 Thought; and the Truth itself (on which  
 that Charity is grounded) will justify a  
 more kind and generous Construction. It  
 is the *Fact* itself, and not the *Principle*  
 from

from which it flows, with which I am SERM.  
concerned. XX.

IF, in Matters of Revelation, Men do not keep to the Rule, but *add* Something of Their Own, the Cause of Error is alike promoted, upon whatever Foot, the Trespas is committed; whether it be done in Contempt of the Divine Oracles, or only by an injudicious Zeal to explain Them. The Offence is by far the greater upon the *former* Supposition, but the Injury, done to the Cause of Truth, is the same in *Both*.

WHAT, therefore, I propose to be considered, is the following Observation, That, as, in Natural Religion, Men ought not, instead of a just Exercise of Their Natural Powers, and Reasoning properly so called, either to indulge Themselves in an utter Disuse of Reason, on the One Hand, or *grow vain in Their Imaginations* on the Other; as They should not allow Themselves in a certain Wantonness of Thought, a certain Luxuriancy of Fancy, and deprave the Religion of Nature, by *adding* Something of Their Own; Something founded in Imagination only, and

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SERM. which has no Foundation in the Truth  
 XX. and Nature of Things : So, in Matters  
 that are to be decided by Revelation, to  
 Revelation We should go; if We admit  
 it for a Rule, We should *treat* it as such,  
 and not defile the Native Chastity and  
 Simplicity of the Scripture-Doctrine, with  
 any Heterogeneous Mixture, whether in-  
 vented by Ourselves, or provided to Our  
 Hands by Others.

It is My Ambition not only to lay  
 before You the Truth, but to do it in  
*that Way*, that will give the least Offence  
 to any Prejudice in the Breast of the Hear-  
 er. With this View, I propose, *in the*  
*first Place*, to shew the Folly of this ill  
 Practice, when considered in the most  
 mild and favourable Light; and, *secondly*,  
 to illustrate the Subject by some Exam-  
 ples, taken from Abroad, and from such  
 Religious Sects, or Parties, as are univer-  
 sally exploded amongst Us.

THE *first* Thing, to be considered, is the  
 Folly of this ill Practice, tho' taken in  
 the mildest and most favourable Light.

THERE is scarce any Virtue, or good  
 Quality, but has some Vice, or Other,  
 that



that borders pretty close upon it, and SERM.  
which, for Want of Care, is frequently XX.  
mistaken for it ; and, perhaps, there is no  
Kind of Moral Pursuit, wherein We are  
more in Danger of committing this Mis-  
take, than in Our Enquiries after Truth.

It is, doubtless, a commendable De-  
sign, to explain as well the Phænomena  
of Religion, as Those of Nature ; it is a  
just and rational Attempt to solve Scrip-  
ture-Difficulties, and reconcile the Texts  
that seem to clash with One Another :  
But, then, this Undertaking, how good  
and laudable soever in itself, may be so  
conducted, as to prove of the utmost Dis-  
service to Religion ; when Men take Oc-  
casion, from Hence, to give a Loose to  
Fancy, and, under Covert of explaining  
Scripture, advance such wild *Hypotheses*  
and Conjectures of Their Own, as have  
no Foundation in Scripture, nor in the  
Truth and Nature of Things. And this  
Grievance becomes still worse, when these  
Human Explications acquire so much  
Strength and Authority with Time, that  
They thrust Themselves into the *Place*  
of the Text itself, and become so many  
Tests

SERM. Tests of Orthodoxy and Articles of Faith;

XX. Their first Rise, and Original, is now forgotten; and What in Reality is of a mere earthly Extract, lays Claim to a celestial Parentage; it vies with the Scripture-Doc-  
trine, and passes itself upon Us for Something truly Divine.

BUT Nothing explains so well as Example; and, therefore, I shall proceed to illustrate the Subject by an Instance or Two, tho' taken, as I before observed, from Abroad, and from Sects, or Parties, universally exploded by Us.

AMONGST the Many wild and extravagant Opinions which the *Marcionites* and *Valentinians* held, This was One, That the God and Father of Our Lord was not made known to Mankind (no, not to the *Jews* Themselves) before the *Augustan* Age, when His Son came into the World, with Design to reveal Him to Us. We might have been perfectly at a Loss to know, How so ill-supported a Notion could enter into the Heart of Man, were it not for a small Treatise of Theirs, which is still in Being, wherein the Author lays together the seeming Contrarieties  
between

between the *Mosaic* Dispensation and That SERM.  
of *Christ*. He observes, How the Lan- XX.  
guage of the Former is *Eye for Eye, and*  
*Tooth for Tooth* : Whilst the Latter com-  
mands Us to *love Our Enemies, and do*  
*Good to Them, that hate Us, &c.* And,  
after He has given Us a Detail of some  
other supposed Inconsistencies between the  
Two Revelations, He has Recourse, at  
length, to this Solution: He tells Us,  
That He knows of no better Way to ac-  
count for these apparently-contradictory  
Revelations, than by supposing Them to  
come from Two different Gods. The  
God, by whom *Moses* was sent, is the  
*just* God, and such was the Dispensation  
that came from Him, full of Rigour and  
Justice. The God, from whom *Christ* re-  
ceived His Commission, was a *good* God,  
and such was the Dispensation that came  
from Him ; it breathed Nothing but Be-  
nignity and Goodness.

By this fine *Hypothesis*, did these Wri-  
ters imagine to have gained Their Point ;  
They presumed, by its Help, to solve all  
the seeming Inconsistencies between the  
Two Dispensations ; Not considering,  
That,



*Against Hypotheses in Religion.*

That, in this Way, they advanced a far greater Difficulty, than That which They proposed to remove, by giving Us such an Idea of the Supreme Being, as has no Foundation either in Reason, or in Revelation, but is alike contradictory to Both.

I WILL not say, What Kind of Figure that *earthly* Prince must make, who is either all Rigour and Justice on the One Hand, or all Mildness and Forgiveness on the Other. But I should think, both *Marcion* and *Valentinus*, if attending to the Nature of Things, might have known, That the *Just* and *Good* are no such opposite Characters. They were, therefore, under no Necessity of having Recourse to Two different Subjects, in order to account for Them: These Characters do perfectly unite and agree in One. And What, if We should add, That, whether the Governor of the World pardons, or condemns, He alike consults the Fitness and Reason of Things under Both; He saves (as *Irenæus*, when combating this very Error, expresses it) ‘Those whom He ought to save, and He condemns Those, who are worthy of being condemned.’

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In either Case, He is self-consistent ; and the *Unity* of Character is preserved, tho' appearing to Us under a *different Form*. SERM.  
XX.

BUT, could these Writers have reconciled, with Reason, Their Scheme of Two Independent Powers, each at the Head of His respective Dispensation, still the Scripture-Account, for which They profess to have a due Regard, militates against it. And, surely, it became Men, professing Themselves Friends of Revelation, to father no such Doctrine upon it, as will make it to *contradict* itself. For, if the *Jews* had One God, and We *Christians* Another, What shall We make of those Words, *God, who at sundry Times, and in diverse Manners, spake to the Fathers by the Prophets, has spoken to Us in these Latter Days by His Son?* Or Those of Our Lord Himself. *If I honour (or glorify) Myself, My Glory is Nothing, it is My Father that glorifies Me, of whom You say that He is Your God?* And to say no more, *Blessed be the God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His People, and has raised up for Us a Horn of Salvation* (alluding to the *Messiah's* Power

or

SERM. or Kingdom)—*as He spoke by the Mouth of*  
 XX. *His holy Prophets,—since the World began ;*  
 { *to perform the Mercy promised to Our Fa-*  
*thers, and to remember His holy Covenant,*  
*the Oath which He swore to Our Father*  
*Abraham. Again, if the God of the*  
*Jewish Dispensation (to use Marcion's*  
*Style) was just, in Contradistinction to*  
*good, I ask, What Sense shall be affixed*  
*to that Characteristic, which He gave of*  
*Himself, at the Opening of that Dispen-*  
*sation, The Lord, the Lord God, gracious*  
*and merciful? As on the Other Hand, if*  
*the Christian's God be good, in Contradi-*  
*stinction to just, Why do We read of,*  
*His judging the World in Righteousness—*  
*and the Wrath of Him that sitteth upon the*  
*Throne and the Lamb?*

BUT, instead of prosecuting this exemplary Method any further at the Present, I shall subjoin One or Two Remarks, which naturally grow out of What has been already said.

WE see from Hence, so close is the Tye, Harmony, and Confederacy, between Natural Religion and Revealed, That it is no easy Matter to corrupt the  
 One,



One, without advancing Something contrary to the Other. A Plan, or Fabric, raised by so wise and masterly a Hand as the *Son* or *Spirit* of God, does not want to be *retouched* by Ours.

SERM.

XX.

POETS and Painters may be allowed Their Fiction; but, of All Men, Your *Religious Projectors* are the most unfortunate. As the Attempt itself is generally accompanied with some Abuse of Reason, no Wonder the Production should take after the Parent, and be alike preposterous and deformed.

IN Proof of This, We need only consider, What Kind of Religion is That, from which the Knowledge of the First Cause is secluded? Or one Deity dethroned, if I may so say, for Want of *Goodness*, whilst Another, who reigns at Present, is as much in Danger of being despised, for Want of *Justice*? Hence Ye mishapen Births! Ye foul and hideous Forms! I have an Eye that is able to distinguish Truth, and from the Time, that I surveyed Her Charms, and saw How truly fair and divine She is, Nothing, beside

SERM. slide the true *Beauty* and Proportion, shall  
 XX. content Me.

WERE these unhappy Innovations to be found only amongst Men, that betray the Want of a due Reverence for Revelation, I would venture to say, No greater Affront can be offered to it. But it is not every Man, that offends on so gross a Principle; and therefore, how deep soever the Probe may go, it calls for the *softest* Touch, and greatest Tenderness of Hand. What Pity is it, that so compleat a System of Divine Truth (for such was *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*) should be thus defaced, and, for Want of Care, suffer upon Our Hands? What Pity, that in so great and solemn a Thing as Religion, and where Nothing, but Truth, should enter, instead of conversing with the Substance and Reality of Things, We should be amused with a Groupe of Shades and Phantoms, or, in the Room of Light and Order, find Ourselves encompassed with a Scene of Darknes and Confusion, and wander up and down in a Maze of Perplexity and Error? We find in Fact, That Nothing has created to *Christianity*  
 more

more Enemies, than the Misrepresenting  
of its Doctrine ; and by the same Means,  
I fear, its best Friends and Champions are  
as much clogged and embarrassed in its  
Defence. For, if They *Speak out*, They  
offend against Vulgar Prejudices. And, if  
to avoid this Inconvenience, They are si-  
lent, the Cause of Revelation suffers,  
through the Want of some very Material  
Considerations, that might otherwise have  
been advanced in its Support.

SERM.  
XX.



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# S E R M O N XXI.

Against *Hypotheses* in Religion.

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PROV. XXX. 6.

*Add Thou not to His Words.*

SERM.  
XXI.

WHOEVER considers, How great a Deference is due to the Eternal Fountain, of Knowledge and Wisdom, will scarce venture to *add to His Words*.

A GOOD Man may commit this Offence through *Inadvertency*, but He cannot, whilst acting in Character, do it with Design.

A GOOD Man, therefore, if consistent with Himself, will not treat a Caution of this Kind with Indifference, but receive the Advice in the same Spirit of Candor, in which it is given ; ‘ He will sit down  
‘ and

‘ and carefully review His Own Scheme SERM.  
‘ of Religion, to see, if there is no XXI.  
‘ *Part* of it, which lies open to such a  
‘ Charge.’

I HAVE already endeavoured to express the Folly of this ill Practice by One Example, and will now beg Leave, in Justice to the Subject, to subjoin Another.

THERE are few Religions, whether true or false, but which, in Process of Time, admit of Change ; They deviate from Their *Primitive* Standard, and (like so many Modes, or Fashions) assume a new Form and Air.

THE Modern *Jews*, for Instance, tho’ agreeing with Their Predecessors in the Expectation of a *Messiah*, cannot agree with Them, concerning the Unity of His Person.

THE Ancient *Jews*, if We may credit the Account, which Our Historians give of Them, spake of the *Christ* in no other Manner, than as of One single Intelligent Agent or Person, though described by *different* Names, according to the different Lights and Capacities, in which He is

SERM. is to be considered. Not so the Later  
 XXI. *Jews*, They find Their Prophets some-  
 times represent the *Messiah* in a State of Suf-  
 fering, and sometimes in a State of Regal  
 Pomp and Glory.

If They were really shocked with this  
 seeming Inconsistency, They have taken  
 the most expeditious Way to remove it,  
 by splitting Their *Messiah* into Two Per-  
 sons, the *First* of which passes for the  
 Sufferer, and the *Second* for the Conqueror.

THERE are some Errors, that want on-  
 ly to be understood, in Order to be ex-  
 ploded. And, therefore, We are so far  
 obliged to the *Jews*, for Speaking out.  
 They do not affect the Dark, They do  
 not *shelter* Themselves in dubious and  
 ambiguous Forms of Speech, but give Us  
 in plain Terms to understand Their Mean-  
 ing. Their Rabbies and Commentators  
 treat, in so many Words, of Two Savi-  
 ours, and Two Redeemers; the One of  
 the Tribe of *Ephraim*, the Other of the  
 House of *David*, and Tribe of *Judah*.  
 The Former, in Their Opinion, paves  
 the Way for the Latter, who shall re-  
 pair



pair the Blow His Predecessor shall receive, and turn the Scale of Victory in Favour of true Religion, that will spread and flourish under His more successful Arms and happier Administration. SERM.  
XXI.

BUT now, if, instead of the Scripture-Unity, the *Dual* Number must be introduced, What will the *Jews* make of all those Passages, where the *very* Person, that suffers in the Cause of God, is represented as the Subject of the Reward? So says the Prophet *Isaiah* : *Therefore will I divide Him a Portion with the Great, and He shall divide the Spoil with the Strong, because He has poured out His Soul unto Death, and was numbered with Transgressors.* Or, How shall We understand another Prophet, who, when personating the *Christ*, cries out, *My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?* And, after having represented Himself as struggling with that Kind of Death, in which His *Hands* and His *Feet* were *pierced*, gives Us to understand, How God had *heard* His Prayer, and that Himself, in Return for so great a Deliverance, would publish His

SERM. *Praises amongst His Brethren. I will*  
 XXI. *declare Thy Name to My Brethren, in the*  
 { *Midst of the Congregation will I sing Prais-*  
*es unto Thee. All the Ends of the Earth*  
*shall remember and turn to the Lord, and*  
*all Kindreds of the Nations shall worship be-*  
*fore Thee.*

WHAT Difficulty is there in believing, That, how opposite soever the States of Pain, and Pleasure, are, They should be found, at *different Times*, in One and the Same Subject, and where the *Ignominy* of the Cross would be succeeded by the *Glo-*ry of the Throne? Or, Which of the Two Schemes, do You think, reflects most Honour upon Revelation, That which represents the All-Wise God, as affording Us, in One single Person, a Pattern of Obedience and Reward? Or, *That*, which (besides the Absurdity of propagating the Truth by Force of Arms) supposes, without any Scripture-Foundation, *Two Messiahs*, the *First* of which is Little better than a Foil to the *Second*, and mis-carries in the Undertaking, that Another may carry it on with more Success and Reputation?

It

IT could have been wished, This Coin-  
age of *Hypotheses* had been confined to  
the *Jews*. It would have been happy  
for Us, could We have kept it without  
the Pale of the *Christian* Profession. But,  
I fear, if We look back into Church-  
History, We shall find Something of the  
same Nature amongst Ourselves.

SERM.  
XXI.

THE old *Gnostics* and *Valentinians* were  
no Strangers to that Branch of the Scrip-  
ture-Doctrine, which some Modern Wri-  
ters have called in Question, I mean the  
Doctrine of Our Saviour's Pre-existent  
State. They did not, with *Socinus*, date  
the Beginning of His Existence from the  
Conception of *Mary*, but allowed, That  
He *had Glory with the Father, before the  
World began.*

ON the other Hand, They found many  
a Text, which represents Our Lord, whilst  
on Earth, under the Capacity of a Man  
subject to Thirst and Hunger, with other  
finless Infirmities incident to the Human  
Nature. Now That all This should hold  
true of that very Person, who *had Glory  
with the Father, before the Foundation of*



SERM. *the World*, appeared either utterly *impossible*, or, at least, *incongruous* in Their Eyes.\*

HERE, therefore, was Their first Mistake. They *erred, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God*. But still this Difficulty must be solved, and What Way did They take to solve it? Like the Modern *Jews*, They had Recourse to the Notion of *Two* Intelligent Agents, the Former of which was, in Their Judgment, That which came down from Heaven, and Him They styled the *Christ*, or *Saviour from above*. The Latter was born of *Mary*, and Him They styled *Jesus*. To this Latter *alone*, They applied All that goes by the Name of *Pain* and *Suffering*. It was the *Animal Jesus* (as They expressed it) *i. e.* in the *Modern Style*, the Human Nature, and This alone, that hungered in the Wilderness, and expired upon the Tree; whilst the Other remained *impassible*, and did, accordingly, either take His Flight from the Man, when led to

\* V. Lactant. & Irenæum.

Execution, as *Cerintbus* imagined, or (as SERM.  
*Valentinus* afterwards refined upon Him) XXI.

‘ He withdrew Himself, that Death might  
‘ take Place, and then communicated of  
‘ His own Name and Virtue to the Other,  
‘ that Death might be abolished by Him.’

HERE, if I am not mistaken, We have  
a fresh Instance of the Folly of *Ad-*  
*ding to the Words* of God. We have  
Here a fresh Proof of that Observation,  
which I shall have frequent Occasion to  
make, That so close is the Confederacy  
between Natural Religion and Revealed,  
that We cannot easily corrupt the One,  
without advancing Something contrary to  
the Other, *i. e.* Something contrary to the  
Nature and Reason of Things, Some-  
thing unnatural and deformed. For, if  
these Writers did, indeed, endeavour to  
prove, That Two Moral Intelligent A-  
gents can be so united as to become One  
Moral Intelligent Agent, and Yet Both  
retain Their respective Powers, and De-  
grees of Knowledge, They endeavoured,  
as much as in Them lay, to make Things  
be What They are not, and cannot be.  
They

SERM. They offered the utmost Violence to the  
 XXI. Truth and Nature of Things ; and, One  
 would be inclined to think, They must have offered as great a Violence to Their Own Understanding, if making any Use of it at All. In vain did these Writers, as *Irenæus* well observes, attempt to shelter Themselves under the *Style of Unity*, when Their Scheme itself overthrew that Supposition. They might, in *Words*, allow of *One* Lord *Jesus*, but, in Reality, They conceived of Him as *Two*. It was the *Lesser* only in Their Opinion, that suffered for Us, whilst the far greater Agent of the *Two* either absolutely withdraws, or, if He stays behind, interests Himself no further in the Affair, than only to communicate of His own Power and Dignity to the Other, *i. e.* Each had Their respective Part, Province, and Moral Agency in the Affair, and, by necessary Consequence, Each was a Distinct, Moral, Intelligent Agent.

BUT, if the Person of Our Lord, which in Scripture is constantly represented as *One*, must be regarded as a *Compound*



pound of Two, tell Me, *Cerintbus*, or tell Me, *Valentinus*, Which of the Two spoke those Words, *Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly*? If Thou sayest, It was the Son of God, that Here proposed Himself for Our Example, Does not the Son of *Mary* stand for a mere Cypher? If it was the Son of *Mary*, Is not the God set aside, and that very Circumstance, which so much ennobles the Example, and so engages Our Regards, overthrown? But if *Both*, I ask, Why are not *Both* expressed? For, surely, Thou wilt not say, That Two Persons could, with any Propriety of Speech, be couched in that Form of Expression, *Learn of Me*. SERM.  
XXI.

AGAIN, if We must, indeed, divide the *Christ*, into Two Spirits, I ask, Which of the Two said those Words, a few Hours before the Crucifixion, *And now, Father, glorify Me with Thyself* (or in Thy Presence) *with that Glory which I had with Thee, before the World was*? If the Man—Who told Them, that Their *Animal Jesus* was coeval with God's first and only Begotten, and had, like Him, *Glory with the Father, before the Foundation*

SERM. *tion of the World?* If They say, It was  
 XXI. the Son of God, or *Saviour from above*,—  
 I then ask, Why could not He, that *prayed*,  
 as consistently be supposed to *suffer*? And  
 if so—For what Reason does *Cerintbus*  
 or *Valentinus* affirm, That He was *im-*  
*passible*? Why must Another carry off the  
 Glory of having done and undergone so  
 Much for Our Sakes? And We, in Con-  
 sequence, be obliged to give that pompous  
 Doxology to Another, *To Him that loved*  
*Us, and washed Us from Our Sins in His*  
*Own Blood—and has made Us Kings and*  
*Priests to His God and Father, to Him be*  
*Glory and Dominion for Ever and Ever,*  
*Amen?*

WHY must either the Sacrifice upon  
 Earth, or Intercession in Heaven, be strip-  
 ped of That, which adds so much Dignity  
 and Solemnity to Both; I mean That it was  
 performed, not by Something *united* to the  
 Son of God, but by the Son of God *Him-*  
*self*? By *Him*, who is *the Brightness of the*  
*Father's Glory, and express Image of His Per-*  
*son, who by Himself, and by no less an Offer-*  
*ing than that of Himself, purged away Our*  
*Sins,*

*Sins, and then took His Seat at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High?* SERM.  
XXI.

IF He, that was *made of a Woman*, and suffered for Us, was Their *Animal Jesus*, How shall We understand those Words, *Awake, O Sword, against the Man that is My Fellow, i. e. a Man*, not of an earthly Extract, but of the same Country, or Community, with Myself, for such is the Import of the Original, *That Lord from Heaven*, and who, when *coming down from Thence*, says in His Own Person, and not in Another's, *A Body hast Thou prepared Me, and I come to do Thy Will, O God*; to do it in That *Body*, that was *prepared* for Him, upon this Occasion; for the Reason of Things speaks as much, and so the Apostle explains it, *By which Will* (meaning the Will of the Supreme Father) *We are sanctified*, or set apart for the Service of God, *through the Offering of the Body of Christ Once for All*.

STRANGE indeed! If Something *more* than a *Body* was necessary to His *imbodyed* State, That the Scripture should ne-

ver



SERM. ver take Notice of it ; but constantly de-  
 XXI. scribe the Incarnation by this single Cir-  
 cumstance, I mean That of a *Body*, and  
 by Nothing more. If a Duplicity of  
 Spirits, in one Intelligent Being or Person,  
 be a Scripture-Doctrine, let it be proved  
 from Thence. Whoever ascribes This,  
 or any other Doctrine to Revelation, is  
 obliged to prove, It is contained therein ;  
 and, the greater Appearance the Doctrine  
 supposed has of Inconsistency with Rea-  
 son, so much the stronger, clearer, and  
 fuller Proofs may justly be insisted on :  
 Because the Honour of Revelation is con-  
 cerned ; and if so—We had need go upon  
 the surest Foot. We had need have, at  
 least, Her Own Warrant for What We  
 say, before We impute those Doctrines  
 to it, which are in Danger of divorcing  
 the most thinking and judicious Part of  
 Mankind from it.

It is not a few disputable Texts, and  
 which, if duly considered, are capable  
 of a different Construction, that will Here  
 suffice ; much less be able to outweigh  
 the constant Style and Tenor of Scripture,

or

or over-rule (What is, *at least*, of equal SERM.  
Weight) the eternal Truth and Nature XXI.  
of Things.

ALAS ! These Men little imagined,  
How great and arduous a Task They had  
undertaken, if, indeed, They appealed to  
Scripture-Authority, and professed to prove  
from thence so exceptionable a Notion, as  
That of Two Moral Intelligent Agents,  
in One *Individual* Self or Person.

IT is a dead Weight upon Many an  
Error, that is fathered upon Scripture,  
' That the *Scripture - Style* will by no  
' Means fit it, it cannot be expressed in  
' Scripture-Terms.' The Consequence of  
Which is This, That the Persons, by whom  
it is maintained, cannot well avoid the A-  
greeing with Us in *Words*, how much  
soever They differ from Us in Their Con-  
ceptions of Things. This Reflexion is not  
My Own, That Ancient \* Writer, who  
combates these very Errors, has made it to  
my Hand : ' They will confess to a Man,  
' says He, but One Lord *Jesus* ; though,

\* Irenæus *advers. Hæreses*.

SERM.

XXI.

‘ as He subjoins, Whatever Unity is pro-  
 ‘ fessed, in Words, is, in Reality, given  
 ‘ up. For, if it were true, That the  
 ‘ One suffered, and the Other remained  
 ‘ incapable of Suffering ; and if the One  
 ‘ was born, and the Other descended on  
 ‘ Him that was born, and again left Him  
 ‘ (meaning at His approaching Sufferings)  
 ‘ Here appears, says He, to be not One, but  
 ‘ Two Persons ; whereas the Scripture  
 ‘ knows but One, and that He has suffered  
 ‘ for Us.’ And again, ‘ If We must form a  
 ‘ Judgment *as of Two*, He will appear to  
 ‘ be the *Better* Person of the Two, who  
 ‘ in the Midst of His Wounds, and Buffet-  
 ‘ tings, and other Indignities, which He re-  
 ‘ ceived, expressed so much Mildness and  
 ‘ Forgiveness ; not He, that *withdrew*,  
 ‘ and consequently felt and suffered No-  
 ‘ thing upon the Occasion.’

BUT it is Time to wind up the Sub-  
 ject with some few Reflexions, that will,  
 at once, inforce What has been already  
 said, and have a Reference to Practice.

WE see Here, How Natural it is for  
 an *injudicious* and over-acted *Zeal* to defeat  
 itself.

LET



LET it be supposed, in a Judgment SERM.  
of Charity, That these old Innovators in XXI.  
Religion thought to do Honour to the {  
*Son of God*, by exempting Him, as  
They did, from Suffering, and other fin-  
less Infirmities of the imbodyed State :  
If This was, indeed Their Intention,  
Their Intention was so far good ; it be-  
spoke a Veneration for the Person of  
*Christ*, joined with a certain Fear of as-  
cribing Aught to Him, that is inconsis-  
tent with His high Rank and Station  
in the Scale of Beings. Here, therefore,  
is a well-meant *Zeal* supposed—— But,  
then, if this *Zeal* be not *according to*  
*Knowledge*, if it is not reduced under  
the Conduct of good Sense and Reason,  
We see, What ill Effects it may pro-  
duce.

I do not question, but that the raw  
*Poetaster*, who made the great *Achil-*  
*les* invulnerable, imagined, That, by this  
Fiction, He had done Him no small  
Honour ; not considering That this sin-  
gle Circumstance robbed Him of the  
whole Glory of all the brave Exploits,

SERM. which He performed before the Walls  
XXI. of Troy.

*HOMER*, who understood the true Panegyric better, gives Us to understand, That His young Heroe declined no Enterprize, how perillous soever, though His Goddess-Mother had informed Him, not That He *might*, but most assuredly *would* fall in the Field, and sacrifice His Life, to the Service of His Country. You will not be at a Loss to see, Which *Part* of the Comparison best answers to the Person under Consideration.

WERE the Captain of Our Salvation as incapable of Suffering, during His embodied State, as He was before, He must give up, as *Irenæus* observed, all that solid and substantial Glory, which is founded in this most wonderful Act of Goodness and Condescension for Us. All that He endured, for the Glory of God and Good of Men, must be set aside — Nor does the Injury stop Here — It extends somewhat farther than the Person of *Christ*; it involves His Religion itself. For, should We affirm, That  
the

the *Son of God* parted with Nothing SERM.  
for Our Sakes, but was all alike at Ease XXI.  
and Happy, when His Body hung upon  
the Tree, as He was before in the *Fa-*  
*ther's Bosom*, Who does not see, That a  
true and proper Incarnation is explain-  
ed away? The Life, Substance, and Rea-  
lity is departed from Us; and, in the  
Room thereof, We have, if You will  
pardon the Expression, a mere *Lusus* or  
Sport of Words. Since, after All that  
We have been told concerning the *Son*  
*of God*, and that most wonderful Love  
and Condescension of *His*, in coming  
down from Heaven, and suffering for  
Us, *He* neither resigned, nor suffered a-  
ny Thing for Us; All This was done  
(if done at all) by Another; it matters  
not to the present Argument, whether  
a *supra-angelic* Spirit, or a Soul of the  
same Kind and Standard with Yours and  
Mine; *This*, and This only, was the Seat  
and Subject of the Suffering, and conse-  
quently *This*, and This only, is the Sub-  
ject of the Reward. To *This* must Our  
Thanks and Praises be addressed; and,



SERM. in *This*, All that Pomp and Glory center,  
 XXI. which, in Return for so consummate a  
 Virtue, the Supreme Being has bestowed.  
 Thus, if You observe, a greatly *inferior*  
 Character performs the Part, and goes off  
 with the Applause, whilst the *true* Heroe  
 is either *withdrawn* behind the Scene, as  
*Cerintus* tells Us ; or, if continued upon  
 the Stage, ' He has only the Honour of  
 ' *Assisting* in the Act, but not of being  
 ' the *very* Agent, by whom it was per-  
 ' formed.'

HAD these Writers considered well  
 those Words of *Christ*, *He, that would be*  
*greatest amongst You, must be the Servant of*  
*All, even as the Son of Man came not to be*  
*ministered unto, but to minister to Others;*  
 Had They considered, That the true Glo-  
 ry consists not so much in the Circum-  
 stance of Power, as in That of Goodness,  
 joined with a certain Firmness and Forti-  
 tude of Mind, determined to carry on  
 some great and excellent Design, let what-  
 ever Obstacles or Dangers lie in the Way,  
*i. e.* Had They judged of Things by the  
 true Standard and Measure, the *Son of God*  
 must

must have appeared more truly great and amiable, from behind that Cloud of Affliction, that covered Him whilst upon Earth, than if He had kept His Seat in Heaven, and, instead of the Glory of redeeming a lost World, had chosen an uninterrupted Series of pleasurable Enjoyments. 'The Son of God (as One \* of the Ancients well observed) cannot be charged with the Love of Ease, who, for Our Sakes, assumed a Body capable of Suffering.' Nor do I see, How *Christianity* itself would be a Loser, by its affording Us an Example of the most perfect Virtue, and This set before Us by so great and excellent a Person. For, if *the Lord of Glory* was, not in *Appearance*, but in Reality, made a little lower than the *Angels*; if He, not in *Appearance*, but in Reality, was brought down upon the Stage of Life, it may then be observed (and, in Honour to the *Christian Revelation*, it should never be forgotten) That this Religion has brought down from Heaven the Greatest of Beings (*next after the First Cause Himself*) with this noble De-

\* *Clemens Alexandrinus.*

SERM. sign, That in *Him*, and in no less a Person  
 XXI. than *Him* (and whose Example, for that  
 very Reason, is the more likely to attract  
 Our Regards) We might see, How *sacred*  
 and *inviolable* a Thing is the Divine Au-  
 thority: ‘ *For, I came down, says He,*  
 ‘ *from Heaven, to do, not My Own Will,*  
 ‘ *but the Will of the Father that sent Me.*’  
 That We, after His Example, might make  
 the like humble *Surrender* of Ourselves to  
 the Supreme Will; and walk in Love, as  
*Christ also has loved Us, and given Himself*  
*for Us, an Offering and Sacrifice of a sweet-*  
*smelling Savour to God.*

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